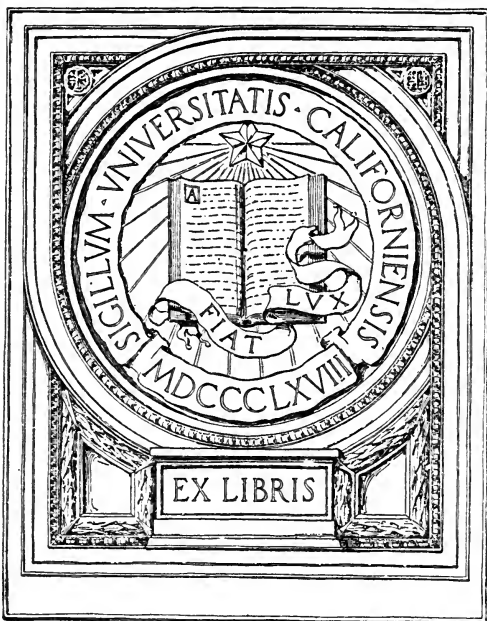


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BALLADS & SONNETS

BY

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

ii



UNIVERSITY OF
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DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

FROM THE PHOTOGRAPH BY W. & D. DOWNEY

TO
THEODORE WATTS,
THE FRIEND WHOM MY VERSE WON FOR ME,
THESE FEW MORE PAGES
ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

238858



In Memoriam

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

(*A Canzone*)

O BORN in May and dead at Eastertide,
O mournful nightingale
That sang as solemn in our English vale
As any in the Italian country side.
Now comes the spring again,
When listeners hush and every songster sings;
The swallows sweep with darting wings
At last and larks arise,
For spring is here and only waits in vain
One sweeter note for which we all are fain
That sounds in Paradise.

Yea, thou art dead, nor hast thou any care
That the first hawthorn swells in bud to-night,
Nor yet for our despair;
Nor for the songs that once were thy delight,
Whose singing wings shall never cease to beat
In music strange and sweet,
And make a southern April in our air.

IN MEMORIAM

But thou art gone before
To that remote, eternal, final shore
That was thine unforgotten goal ;
And thou hast climbed the mount of Paradise ;
And thy triumphant soul,
With him who living went that way,
And him who saw all Heaven with blinded eyes,
Rejoices in the day !

Rejoice at last, O souls,
That never were on earth completely glad
For the full vision that ye had
Of everlasting things ;
Now sing within your shining aureoles
And strike the golden strings
Of an eternal lyre !
Thou, too, O latest comer in the Quire,
Whom most I praise with him
Thy master, and our milder English seer.
Lift up thy music clear ;
For never didst thou find the vision dim,
Or long to linger here
Among the roses and the summer green,
But, knowing not a wavering in desire,
With unrelenting wings
Thou fleddest past us towards eternal things
As swallows fly to summers never seen.

A. MARY F. ROBINSON.

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* First brought together in the *Collected Works*, (1886) and, excepting a few which have an asterisk prefixed to title, not found elsewhere. The poems with asterisk were printed by Rossetti "in some outlying form, but not in his volumes." See Notes by W. M. Rossetti.

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PREFACE



PREFACE

WITH the completion of *Ballads and Sonnets* our editorial labours in connexion with the poetical works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti come to an end. The main object of giving the American reader an untampered text in Rossetti's original order of publication and "in a *format* commensurate with his rank and dignity as a poet," thus stands accomplished. A few additional poems brought together from various sources since 1881 by his brother and editor, Mr. W. M. Rossetti, are properly placed at the close of the present volume.¹

There are in existence, however, certain *desiderata* which might well have found place here had that been possible. "One of these is a grotesque ballad about a Dutchman, begun at a very early date, and finished in his last illness. The other is a brace of sonnets, interesting in subject and as being the last thing that he wrote. These works were presented as a gift of love and gratitude to a friend, with whom it remains for

¹ For what may be regarded as a final contribution to the literature of odds and ends, see *Some Scraps of Verse and Prose by Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, in *The Pall Mall Magazine* for December, 1898, pp. 480-496. From this source in our reprint of *Poems* (pp. 331-335,) we have availed ourselves of the one piece worth reprinting, to wit: *Ave*, in an earlier and more extended form.

PREFACE

publishing at his own discretion.”² Further light is thrown upon this subject by Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton in an article entitled *Rossetti's Unpublished Poems*.³ Therein a promise was made: “Time . . . is the suzerain before whom every king, even Sorrow himself, bows at last. The rights of Rossetti's admirers can no longer be set at nought, and I am making arrangements to publish within the present year *Jan Van Hunks* and the ‘Sphinx Sonnets,’ the former of which will show a new and, I think, an unexpected side of Rossetti's genius.” Seven years have elapsed since this was written but these “rights” unhappily remain unsatisfied!

Concerning three other poems, “two of them sonnets, a third a ballad of no great length,” we have already dealt with the first sonnet—*Nuptial Sleep*—in the only manner possible. As regards the second sonnet—*After the French Liberation of Italy*—which Rossetti put into print when preparing the volume of 1870, we can for once entirely agree with him and his editor as to the propriety of its remaining unpublished.⁴

² See Preface to the *Collected Works*, Vol. I, pp. xxxiii; also *Dante Gabriel Rossetti as Designer and Writer: Notes by W. M. Rossetti*, (London, 1889,) p. 175, where the title of the first poem is given as *The Dutchman's Pipe*. The sonnets (p. 93,) were entitled *The Sphinx*.

³ Contributed to *The Athenæum* for May 23, 1896. See also a letter of great interest in *The Spectator* for April 25, 1896, upon which we base our closing paragraph.

⁴ This sonnet along with his *Autumn Song* is now and again offered at an exorbitant price to collectors: *Verses / By / Dante Gabriel Rossetti / London: Privately Printed: / 1881.*

Octavo. Wrapper. Pp. 16, (including half-titles and blank leaves).

PREFACE

Lastly, the ballad "of no great length"—*Dennis Shand*—which we have been privileged to read in the cancelled proof-pages, may also be safely relegated to the realm of abortive verse. Contrariwise two juvenile translations are intentionally omitted by us: the longest, taken from a poem—*Der Arme Heinrich*—is by Hartmann von Auë the old German minnesinger.⁵ An earlier effort consists of a version of Bürger's *Lenore* completed on or about Rossetti's sixteenth year.⁶

Regarding our illustrations the two facsimiles are taken from Mr. William Sharp's volume of very positive value,—*Dante Gabriel Rossetti: a Record and a Study*,⁷ while the Rossetti portrait, chosen for frontispiece, is an enlarged copy by Bierstadt process of the original photograph of 1862.

One would indeed rejoice to know that an authoritative biography of Rossetti was set down for publication in the immediate future. For this boon we may have some few years more to wait. Nevertheless it is tolerably certain that the

⁵ Printed in the *Collected Works*, (Vol. II, pp. 420-460.) under the title of *Henry the Leper: A Swabian Miracle-Rhyme*.

⁶ See W. M. Rossetti's preface to *Lenore by Gottfried August Bürger: Translated from the German by Dante Gabriel Rossetti* (quarto), London, 1900. An original unpublished ballad in MS., composed at the same early age, and consisting of twenty-five four-line stanzas, entitled *William and Mary*, was quite recently offered for sale by a Chicago bookseller, (April, 1903).

⁷ The original design for the Introductory Sonnet is in pen-and-ink and was presented to Rossetti's mother on her eightieth birthday, April 27, 1880.

PREFACE

friend to whom "he unlocked the most sacred secrets of his heart" will, when the time has arrived for him to speak, take the world into his confidence. In that day we shall possess a picture of the poet-painter as he appeared to one who loved him very dearly, limned in language of enduring truth, for all time present and to come.

We now take leave of Rossetti in a prefatory way: of his poetry and art there can be no final leave-taking.

" Clouds are there none to dim for thee heaven's glow ;
The measured hours compel not thee at all ;
Chance or necessity thou canst not know.
Thy splendour wanes not when our night doth fall,
Nor waxes with day's light however clear,
Nor when our suns the season's warmth recall."

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

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IT was characteristic of a poet who had ever something about him of mystic isolation, and will still appeal perhaps, though with a name it may seem now established in English literature, to a special and limited audience, that some of his poems had won a kind of exquisite fame before they were in the full sense published. *The Blessed Damozel*, although actually printed twice before the year 1870, was eagerly circulated in manuscript; and the volume which it now opens came at last to satisfy a long-standing curiosity as to the poet, whose pictures also had become an object of the same peculiar kind of interest. For those poems were the work of a painter, understood to belong to, and to be indeed the leader, of a new school then rising into note; and the reader of to-day may observe already, in *The Blessed Damozel*, written at the age of eighteen, a prefigurement of the chief characteristics of that school, as he will recognise in it also, in proportion as he really knows Rossetti, many of the characteristics which are most markedly personal and his own. Common to that school and to him, and in both alike of primary significance,

DANTE GABRIEL ROSSETTI

was the quality of sincerity, already felt as one of the charms of that earliest poem — a perfect sincerity, taking effect in the deliberate use of the most direct and unconventional expression, for the conveyance of a poetic sense which recognised no conventional standard of what poetry was called upon to be. At a time when poetic originality in England might seem to have had its utmost play, here was certainly one new poet more, with a structure and music of verse, a vocabulary, an accent, unmistakably novel, yet felt to be no mere tricks of manner adopted with a view to forcing attention — an accent which might rather count as the very seal of reality on one man's own proper speech; as that speech itself was the wholly natural expression of certain wonderful things he really felt and saw. Here was one, who had a matter to present to his readers, to himself at least, in the first instance, so valuable, so real and definite, that his primary aim, as regards form or expression in his verse, would be but its exact equivalence to those *data* within. That he had this gift of transparency in language — the control of a style which did but obediently shift and shape itself to the mental motion, as a well-trained hand can follow on the tracing-paper the outline of an original drawing below it, was proved afterwards by a volume of typically perfect translations

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from the delightful but difficult “early Italian poets:” such transparency being indeed the secret of all genuine style, of all such style as can truly belong to one man and not to another. His own meaning was always personal and even recondite, in a certain sense learned and casuistical, sometimes complex or obscure; but the term was always, one could see, deliberately chosen from many competitors, as the just transcript of that peculiar phase of soul which he alone knew, precisely as he knew it.

One of the peculiarities of *The Blessed Damozel* was a definiteness of sensible imagery, which seemed almost grotesque to some, and was strange, above all, in a theme so profoundly visionary. The gold bar of heaven from which she leaned, her hair yellow like ripe corn, are but examples of a general treatment, as naïvely detailed as the pictures of those early painters contemporary with Dante, who has shown a similar care for minute and definite imagery in his verse; there, too, in the very midst of profoundly mystic vision. Such definition of outline is indeed one among many points in which Rossetti resembles the great Italian poet, of whom, led to him at first by family circumstances, he was ever a lover — a “servant and singer,” faithful as Dante, “of Florence and of Beatrice” — with some close inward

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conformities of genius also, independent of any mere circumstances of education. It was said by a critic of the last century, not wisely though agreeably to the practice of his time, that poetry rejoices in abstractions. For Rossetti, as for Dante, without question on his part, the first condition of the poetic way of seeing and presenting things is particularisation. "Tell me now," he writes, for Villon's

"Dites-moy où, n'en quel pays,
Est Flora, la belle Romaine"—

"Tell me now, in what hidden way is
Lady Flora the lovely Roman :"

— "way," in which one might actually chance to meet her; the unmistakably poetic effect of the couplet in English being dependent on the definiteness of that single word (though actually lighted on in the search after a difficult double rhyme) for which every one else would have written, like Villon himself, a more general one, just equivalent to place or region.

And this delight in concrete definition is allied with another of his conformities to Dante, the really imaginative vividness, namely, of his personifications — his hold upon them, or rather their hold upon him, with the force of a Frankenstein, when once they have taken life from him. Not Death only and Sleep, for instance, and the

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winged spirit of Love, but certain particular aspects of them, a whole "populace" of special hours and places, "the hour" even "which might have been, yet might not be," are living creatures, with hands and eyes and articulate voices.

" Stands it not by the door —
Love's Hour — till she and I shall meet;
With bodiless form and unapparent feet
That cast no shadow yet before,
Though round its head the dawn begins to pour
The breath that makes day sweet?" —

" Nay, why
Name the dead hours? I mind them well:
Their ghosts in many darkened doorways dwell
With desolate eyes to know them by."

Poetry as a *mania* — one of Plato's two higher forms of "divine" mania — has, in all its species, a mere insanity incidental to it, the "defect of its quality," into which it may lapse in its moment of weakness; and the insanity which follows a vivid poetic anthropomorphism like that of Rossetti may be noted here and there in his work, in a forced and almost grotesque materialising of abstractions, as Dante also became at times a mere subject of the scholastic realism of the Middle Age.

In *Love's Nocturn* and *The Stream's Secret*, congruously perhaps with a certain feverishness of soul in

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the moods they present, there is at times a near approach (may it be said?) to such insanity of realism —

“Pity and love shall burn
In her pressed cheek and cherishing hands;
And from the living spirit of love that stands
Between her lips to soothe and yearn,
Each separate breath shall clasp me round in turn
And loose my spirit's bands.”

But even if we concede this; even if we allow, in the very plan of those two compositions, something of the literary conceit — what exquisite, what novel flowers of poetry, we must admit them to be, as they stand! In the one, what a delight in all the natural beauty of water, all its details for the eye of a painter; in the other, how subtle and fine the imaginative hold upon all the secret ways of sleep and dreams! In both of them, with much the same attitude and tone, Love — sick and doubtful Love — would fain inquire of what lies below the surface of sleep, and below the water; stream or dream being forced to speak by Love's powerful “control;” and the poet would have it foretell the fortune, issue, and event of his wasting passion. Such artifices, indeed, were not unknown in the old Provençal poetry of which Dante had learned something. Only, in Rossetti at least, they are redeemed by a serious purpose, by that sincerity of his, which allies itself readily to a serious beauty, a sort

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of grandeur of literary workmanship, to a great style. One seems to hear there a really new kind of poetic utterance, with effects which have nothing else like them; as there is nothing else, for instance, like the narrative of Jacob's Dream in *Genesis*, or Blake's design of the Singing of the Morning Stars, or Addison's Nineteenth Psalm.

With him indeed, as in some revival of the old mythopœic age, common things — dawn, noon, night — are full of human or personal expression, full of sentiment. The lovely little sceneries scattered up and down his poems, glimpses of a landscape, not indeed of broad open-air effects, but rather that of a painter concentrated upon the picturesque effect of one or two selected objects at a time — the “hollow brimmed with mist,” or the “ruined weir,” as he sees it from one of the windows, or reflected in one of the mirrors of his “house of life” (the vignettes for instance seen by Rose Mary in the magic beryl) attest, by their very freshness and simplicity, to a pictorial or descriptive power in dealing with the inanimate world, which is certainly also one half of the charm, in that other, more remote and mystic, use of it. For with Rossetti this sense of lifeless nature after all, is translated to a higher service, in which it does but incorporate itself

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with some phase of strong emotion. Every one understands how this may happen at critical moments of life; what a weirdly expressive soul may have crept, even in full noonday, into "the white-flower'd elder-thicket," when Godiva saw it "gleam through the Gothic archways in the wall," at the end of her terrible ride. To Rossetti it is so always, because to him life is a crisis at every moment. A sustained impressibility towards the mysterious conditions of man's everyday life, towards the very mystery itself in it, gives a singular gravity to all his work: those matters never became trite to him. But throughout, it is the ideal intensity of love — of love based upon a perfect yet peculiar type of physical or material beauty — which is enthroned in the midst of those mysterious powers; Youth and Death, Destiny and Fortune, Fame, Poetic Fame, Memory, Oblivion, and the like. Rossetti is one of those who, in the words of Mérimée, *se passionnent pour la passion*, one of Love's lovers.

And yet, again as with Dante, to speak of his ideal type of beauty as material, is partly misleading. Spirit and matter, indeed, have been for the most part opposed, with a false contrast or antagonism, by schoolmen, whose artificial creation those abstractions really are. In our actual concrete experience, the two trains of phenomena

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which the words *matter* and *spirit* do but roughly distinguish, play inextricably into each other. Practically, the church of the Middle Age by its æsthetic worship, its sacramentalism, its real faith in the resurrection of the flesh, had set itself against that Manichean opposition of spirit and matter, and its results in men's way of taking life; and in this, Dante is the central representative of its spirit. To him, in the vehement and impassioned heat of his conceptions, the material and the spiritual are fused and blent: if the spiritual attains the definite visability of a crystal, what is material loses its earthiness and impurity. And here again, by force of instinct, Rossetti is one with him. His chosen type of beauty is one,

“ Whose speech Truth knows not from her thought,
Nor Love her body from her soul.”

Like Dante, he knows no region of spirit which shall not be sensuous also, or material. The shadowy world, which he realises so powerfully, has still the ways and houses, the land and water, the light and darkness, the fire and flowers, that had so much to do in the moulding of those bodily powers and aspects which counted for so large a part of the soul, here.

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For Rossetti, then, the great affections of persons to each other, swayed and determined, in the case of his highly pictorial genius, mainly by that so-called material loveliness, formed the great undeniable reality in things, the solid resisting substance, in a world where all beside might be but shadow. The fortunes of those affections — of the great love so determined; its casuistries, its languor sometimes; above all, its sorrows; its fortunate or unfortunate collisions with those other great matters; how it looks, as the long day of life goes round, in the light and shadow of them: all this, conceived with an abundant imagination, and a deep, a philosophic, reflectiveness, is the matter of his verse, and especially of what he designed as his chief poetic work, “a work to be called *The House of Life*,” towards which the majority of his sonnets and songs were contributions.

The dwelling-place in which one finds oneself by chance or destiny, yet can partly fashion for oneself; never properly one's own at all, if it be changed too lightly; in which every object has its associations — the dim mirrors, the portraits, the lamps, the books, the hair-tresses of the dead and visionary magic crystals in the secret drawers, the names and words scratched on the windows, windows open upon prospects the saddest or the sweetest; the house one must quit, yet taking

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perhaps, how much of its quietly active light and colour along with us!—grown now to be a kind of raiment to one's body, as the body, according to Swedenborg, is but the raiment of the soul—under that image, the whole of Rossetti's work might count as a *House of Life*, of which he is but the "Interpreter." And it is a "haunted" house. A sense of power in love, defying distance, and those barriers which are so much more than physical distance, of unutterable desire penetrating into the world of sleep, however "lead-bound," was one of those anticipative notes obscurely struck in *The Blessed Damozel*, and, in his later work, makes him speak sometimes almost like a believer in mesmerism. Dream-land, as we said, with its "phantoms of the body," deftly coming and going on love's service, is to him, in no mere fancy or figure of speech, a real country, a veritable expansion of, or addition to, our waking life; and he did well perhaps to wait carefully upon sleep, for the lack of it became mortal disease with him. One may even recognise a sort of morbid and over-hasty making-ready for death itself, which increases on him; thoughts concerning it, its imageries, coming with a frequency and importunity, in excess, one might think, of even the very saddest, quite wholesome wisdom.

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And indeed the publication of his second volume of *Ballads and Sonnets* preceded his death by scarcely a twelvemonth. That volume bears witness to the reverse of any failure of power, or falling-off from his early standard of literary perfection, in every one of his then accustomed forms of poetry — the song, the sonnet, and the ballad. The newly printed sonnets, now completing the *House of Life*, certainly advanced beyond those earlier ones, in clearness; his dramatic power in the ballad, was here at its height; while one monumental, gnomonic piece, *Soothsay*, testifies, more clearly even than the *Nineveh* of his first volume, to the reflective force, the dry reason, always at work behind his imaginative creations, which at no time dispensed with a genuine intellectual structure. For in matters of pure reflection also, Rossetti maintained the painter's sensuous clearness of conception; and this has something to do with the capacity, largely illustrated by his ballads, of telling some red-hearted story of impassioned action with effect.

Have there, in very deed, been ages, in which the external conditions of poetry such as Rossetti's were of more spontaneous growth than in our own? The archaic side of Rossetti's work, his preferences in regard to earlier poetry, connect him with those who have certainly

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thought so, who fancied they could have breathed more largely in the age of Chaucer, or of Ronsard, in one of those ages, in the words of Stendhal — *ces siècles de passions où les âmes pouvaient se livrer franchement à la plus haute exaltation, quand les passions qui font la possibilité comme les sujets des beaux arts existaient.* We may think, perhaps, that such old time as that has never really existed except in the fancy of poets ; but it was to find it, that Rossetti turned so often from modern life to the chronicle of the past. Old Scotch history, perhaps beyond any other, is strong in the matter of heroic and vehement hatreds and love, the tragic Mary herself being but the perfect blossom of them ; and it is from that history that Rossetti has taken the subjects of the two longer ballads of his second volume : of the three admirable ballads in it, *The King's Tragedy* (in which Rossetti has dexterously interwoven some relics of James's own exquisite early verse) reaching the highest level of dramatic success, and marking perfection, perhaps, in this kind of poetry ; which, in the earlier volume, gave us, among other pieces, *Troy Town*, *Sister Helen*, and *Eden Bower*.

Like those earlier pieces, the ballads of the second volume bring with them the question of the poetic value of the "refrain" —

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“Eden bower’s in flower :
And O the bower and the hour !”

— and the like. Two of those ballads — *Troy Town* and *Eden Bower*, are terrible in theme ; and the refrain serves, perhaps, to relieve their bold aim at the sentiment of terror. In *Sister Helen* again, the refrain has a real, and sustained purpose (being here duly varied also) and performs the part of a chorus, as the story proceeds. Yet even in these cases, whatever its effect may be in actual recitation, it may fairly be questioned, whether, to the mere reader their actual effect is not that of a positive interruption and drawback, at least in pieces so lengthy ; and Rossetti himself, it would seem, came to think so, for in the shortest of his later ballads, *The White Ship* — that old true history of the generosity with which a youth, worthless in life, flung himself upon death — he was contented with a single utterance of the refrain, “ given out ” like the keynote or tune of a chant.

In *The King’s Tragedy*, Rossetti has worked upon motive, broadly human (to adopt the phrase of popular criticism) such as one and all may realise. Rossetti, indeed, with all his self-concentration upon his own peculiar aim, by no means ignored those general interests which are external to poetry as he conceived it ; as he has shown here and there, in this poetic, as also in picto-

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rial, work. It was but that, in a life to be shorter even than the average, he found enough to occupy him in the fulfilment of a task, plainly "given him to do." Perhaps, if one had to name a single composition of his to readers desiring to make acquaintance with him for the first time, one would select: *The King's Tragedy*—that poem so moving, so popularly dramatic, and lifelike. Notwithstanding this, his work, it must be conceded, certainly through no narrowness or egotism, but in the faithfulness of a true workman to a vocation so emphatic, was mainly of the esoteric order. But poetry, at all times, exercises two distinct functions: it may reveal, it may unveil to every eye, the ideal aspects of common things, after Gray's way (though Gray too, it is well to remember, seemed in his own day, seemed even to Johnson, obscure) or it may actually add to the number of motives poetic and uncommon in themselves, by the imaginative creation of things that are ideal from their very birth. Rossetti did something, something excellent, of the former kind; but his characteristic, his really revealing work, lay in the adding to poetry of fresh poetic material, of a new order of phenomena, in the creation of a new ideal.

WALTER PATER.

1883.

BALLADS AND SONNETS
MDCCLXXXI

ROSE MARY

*Of her two fights with the Beryl-stone:
Lost the first, but the second won.*

ROSE MARY

PART I

“**M**ARY mine that art Mary’s Rose,
Come in to me from the garden-close.
The sun sinks fast with the rising dew,
And we marked not how the faint noon grew ;
But the hidden stars are calling you.

“Tall Rose Mary, come to my side,
And read the stars if you’d be a bride.
In hours whose need was not your own,
While you were a young maid yet ungrown,
You’ve read the stars in the Beryl-stone.

“Daughter, once more I bid you read ;
But now let it be for your own need :
Because to-morrow, at break of day,
To Holy Cross he rides on his way,
Your knight Sir James of Heronhaye.

“Ere he wed you, flower of mine,
For a heavy shrift he seeks the shrine.
Now hark to my words and do not fear ;
Ill news next I have for your ear ;
But be you strong, and our help is here.

ROSE MARY

“ On his road, as the rumour’s rife,
An ambush waits to take his life.
He needs will go, and will go alone ;
Where the peril lurks may not be known ;
But in this glass all things are shown.”

Pale Rose Mary sank to the floor :—
“ The night will come if the day is o’er !”
“ Nay, heaven takes counsel, star with star,
And help shall reach your heart from afar :
A bride you’ll be, as a maid you are.”

The lady unbound her jewelled zone
And drew from her robe the Beryl-stone.
Shaped it was to a shadowy sphere,—
World of our world, the sun’s compeer,
That bears and buries the toiling year.

With shuddering light ’twas stirred and strewn
Like the cloud-nest of the wading moon :
Freaked it was as the bubble’s ball,
Rainbow-hued through a misty pall
Like the middle light of the waterfall.

Shadows dwelt in its teeming girth
Of the known and unknown things of earth ;
The cloud above and the wave around,—
The central fire at the sphere’s heart bound,
Like doomsday prisoned underground.

ROSE MARY

A thousand years it lay in the sea
With a treasure wrecked from Thessaly ;
Deep it lay 'mid the coiled sea-wrack,
But the ocean-spirits found the track :
A soul was lost to win it back.

The lady upheld the wondrous thing :—
“ Ill fare ” (she said) “ with a fiend's-fairing :
But Moslem blood poured forth like wine
Can hallow Hell, 'neath the Sacred Sign ;
And my lord brought this from Palestine.

“ Spirits who fear the Blessed Rood
Drove forth the accursed multitude
That heathen worship housed herein,—
Never again such home to win,
Save only by a Christian's sin.

“ All last night at an altar fair
I burnt strange fires and strove with prayer ;
Till the flame paled to the red sunrise,
All rites I then did solemnize ;
And the spell lacks nothing but your eyes.”

Low spake maiden Rose Mary :—
“ O mother mine, if I should not see ! ”
“ Nay, daughter, cover your face no more,
But bend love's heart to the hidden lore,
And you shall see now as heretofore.”

ROSE MARY

Paler yet were the pale cheeks grown
As the grey eyes sought the Beryl-stone :
Then over her mother's lap leaned she,
And stretched her thrilled throat passionately,
And sighed from her soul, and said, "I see."

Even as she spoke, they two were 'ware
Of music-notes that fell through the air ;
A chiming shower of strange device,
Drop echoing drop, once twice and thrice,
As rain may fall in Paradise.

An instant come, in an instant gone,
No time there was to think thereon.
The mother held the sphere on her knee :—
"Lean this way and speak low to me,
And take no note but of what you see."

"I see a man with a besom grey
That sweeps the flying dust away."
"Ay, that comes first in the mystic sphere ;
But now that the way is swept and clear,
Heed well what next you look on there."

"Stretched aloft and adown I see
Two roads that part in waste-country :
The glen lies deep and the ridge stands tall ;
What's great below is above seen small,
And the hill-side is the valley-wall."

ROSE MARY

“Stream-bank, daughter, or moor and moss,
Both roads will take to Holy Cross.
The hills are a weary waste to wage;
But what of the valley-road’s presage?
That way must tend his pilgrimage.”

“As ’twere the turning leaves of a book,
The road runs past me as I look;
Or it is even as though mine eye
Should watch calm waters filled with sky
While lights and clouds and wings went by.”

“In every covert seek a spear;
They’ll scarce lie close till he draws near.”
“The stream has spread to a river now;
The stiff blue sedge is deep in the slough,
But the banks are bare of shrub or bough.”

“Is there any roof that near at hand
Might shelter yield to a hidden band?”
“On the further bank I see but one,
And a herdsman now in the sinking sun
Unyokes his team at the threshold-stone.”

“Keep heedful watch by the water’s edge,—
Some boat might lurk ’neath the shadowed sedge.”
“One slid but now ’twixt the winding shores,
But a peasant woman bent to the oars
And only a young child steered its course.”

ROSE MARY

“ Mother, something flashed to my sight!—
Nay, it is but the lapwing’s flight.—
What glints there like a lance that flees?—
Nay, the flags are stirred in the breeze,
And the water’s bright through the dart-rushes.

“ Ah! vainly I search from side to side :—
Woe’s me! and where do the foemen hide?
Woe’s me! and perchance I pass them by,
And under the new dawn’s blood-red sky
Even where I gaze the dead shall lie.”

Said the mother : “ For dear love’s sake,
Speak more low, lest the spell should break.”
Said the daughter : “ By love’s control,
My eyes, my words, are strained to the goal;
But oh! the voice that cries in my soul!”

“ Hush, sweet, hush! be calm and behold.”
“ I see two floodgates broken and old :
The grasses wave o’er the ruined weir,
But the bridge still leads to the breakwater;
And — mother, mother, O mother dear!”

The damsel clung to her mother’s knee,
And dared not let the shriek go free ;
Low she crouched by the lady’s chair,
And shrank blindfold in her fallen hair,
And whispering said, “ The spears are there !”

ROSE MARY

The lady stooped aghast from her place,
And cleared the locks from her daughter's face.
"More's to see, and she swoons, alas!
Look, look again, 'ere the moment pass!
One shadow comes but once to the glass.

"See you there what you saw but now?"
"I see eight men 'neath the willow-bough.
All over the weir a wild growth's spread:
Ah me! it will hide a living head
As well as the water hides the dead.

"They lie by the broken water-gate
As men who have a while to wait.
The chief's high lance has a blazoned scroll,—
He seems some lord of tithe and toll
With seven squires to his bannerole.

"The little pennon quakes in the air,
I cannot trace the blazon there:—
Ah! now I can see the field of blue,
The spurs and the merlins two and two;—
It is the Warden of Holycleugh!"

"God be thanked for the thing we know!
You have named your good knight's mortal foe.
Last Shrovetide in the tourney-game
He sought his life by treasonous shame;
And this way now doth he seek the same.

ROSE MARY

“So, fair lord, such a thing you are !
But we too watch till the morning star.
Well, June is kind and the moon is clear :
Saint Judas send you a merry cheer
For the night you lie at Warisweir !

“Now, sweet daughter, but one more sight,
And you may lie soft and sleep to-night.
We know in the vale what perils be :
Now look once more in the glass, and see
If over the hills the road lies free.”

Rose Mary pressed to her mother's cheek,
And almost smiled but did not speak ;
Then turned again to the saving spell,
With eyes to search and with lips to tell
The heart of things invisible.

“Again the shape with the besom grey
Comes back to sweep the clouds away.
Again I stand where the roads divide ;
But now all's near on the steep hillside,
And a thread far down is the rivertide.”

“Ay, child, your road is o'er moor and moss,
Past Holycleugh to Holy Cross.
Our hunters lurk in the valley's wake,
As they knew which way the chase would take :
Yet search the hills for your true love's sake.”

ROSE MARY

“Swift and swifter the waste runs by,
And nought I see but the heath and the sky ;
No brake is there that could hide a spear,
And the gaps to a horseman’s sight lie clear ;
Still past it goes, and there’s nought to fear.”

“Fear no trap that you cannot see,—
They’d not lurk yet too warily.
Below by the weir they lie in sight,
And take no heed how they pass the night
Till close they crouch with the morning light.”

“The road shifts ever and brings in view
Now first the heights of Holycleugh :
Dark they stand o’er the vale below,
And hide that heaven which yet shall show
The thing their master’s heart doth know.

“Where the road looks to the castle steep,
There are seven hill-clefts wide and deep :
Six mine eyes can search as they list,
But the seventh hollow is brimmed with mist ;
If aught were there, it might not be wist.”

“Small hope, my girl, for a helm to hide
In mists that cling to a wild moorside :
Soon they melt with the wind and sun,
And scarce would wait such deeds to be done :
God send their snares be the worst to shun.”

ROSE MARY

“ Still the road winds ever anew
As it hastens on towards Holycleugh ;
And ever the great walls loom more near,
Till the castle-shadow, steep and sheer,
Drifts like a cloud, and the sky is clear.”

“ Enough, my daughter,” the mother said,
And took to her breast the bending head ;
“ Rest, poor head, with my heart below,
While love still lulls you as long ago :
For all is learnt that we need to know.

“ Long the miles and many the hours
From the castle-height to the abbey-towers ;
But here the journey has no more dread ;
Too thick with life is the whole road spread
For murder’s trembling foot to tread.”

She gazed on the Beryl-stone full fain
Ere she wrapped it close in her robe again :
The flickering shades were dusk and dun,
And the lights throbbled faint in unison,
Like a high heart when a race is run.

As the globe slid to its silken gloom,
Once more a music rained through the room ;
Low it splashed like a sweet star-spray,
And sobbed like tears at the heart of May,
And died as laughter dies away.

ROSE MARY

The lady held her breath for a space,
And then she looked in her daughter's face :
But wan Rose Mary had never heard ;
Deep asleep like a sheltered bird
She lay with the long spell minister'd.

“ Ah ! and yet I must leave you, dear,
For what you have seen your knight must hear.
Within four days, by the help of God,
He comes back safe to his heart's abode :
Be sure he shall shun the valley-road.”

Rose Mary sank with a broken moan,
And lay in the chair and slept alone,
Weary, lifeless, heavy as lead :
Long it was ere she raised her head
And rose up all discomforted.

She searched her brain for a vanished thing,
And clasped her brows, remembering ;
Then knelt and lifted her eyes in awe,
And sighed with a long sigh sweet to draw :—
“ Thank God, thank God, thank God I saw ! ”

The lady had left her as she lay,
To seek the Knight of Heronhay. e
But first she clomb by a secret stair,
And knelt at a carven altar fair,
And laid the precious Beryl there.

ROSE MARY

Its girth was graved with a mystic rune
In a tongue long dead 'neath sun and moon :
A priest of the Holy Sepulchre
Read that writing and did not err ;
And her lord had told its sense to her.

She breathed the words in an undertone :—
“ *None sees here but the pure alone.*”
“ And oh ! ” she said, “ what rose may be
In Mary’s bower more pure to see
Than my own sweet maiden Rose Mary ? ”

ROSE MARY

BERYL-SONG

*We whose home is the Beryl,
Fire-spirits of dread desire,
Who entered in
By a secret sin,
'Gainst whom all powers that strive with ours are
sterile,—
We cry, Woe to thee, mother!
What hast thou taught her, the girl thy daughter,
That she and none other
Should this dark morrow to her deadly sorrow imperil?
What were her eyes
But the fiend's own spies,
O mother,
And shall We not see her, our proper prophet and seër?
Go to her, mother,
Even thou, yea thou and none other,
Thou, from the Beryl:
Her fee must thou take her,
Her fee that We send, and make her,
Even in this hour, her sin's unsheltered avower.
Whose steed did neigh,
Riderless, bridle-less,
At her gate before it was day?
Lo! where doth hover
The soul of her lover?*

ROSE MARY

*She sealed his doom, she, she was the sworn approver,—
Whose eyes were so wondrous wise,
Yet blind, ah! blind to his peril!
For stole not We in
Through a love-linked sin,
' Gainst whom all powers at war with ours are sterile,—
Fire-spirits of dread desire,
We whose home is the Beryl?*

ROSE MARY

PART II

“PALE Rose Mary, what shall be done
With a rose that Mary weeps upon?”

“Mother, let it fall from the tree,
And never walk where the strewn leaves be
Till winds have passed and the path is free.”

“Sad Rose Mary, what shall be done
With a cankered flower beneath the sun?”

“Mother, let it wait for the night;
Be sure its shame shall be out of sight
Ere the moon pale or the east grow light.”

“Lost Rose Mary, what shall be done
With a heart that is but a broken one?”

“Mother, let it lie where it must;
The blood was drained with the bitter thrust,
And dust is all that sinks in the dust.”

“Poor Rose Mary, what shall I do,—
I, your mother, that lovèd you?”

“O my mother, and is love gone?
Then seek you another love anon:
Who cares what shame shall lean upon?”

ROSE MARY

Low drooped trembling Rose Mary,
Then up as though in a dream stood she.
“Come, my heart, it is time to go;
This is the hour that has whispered low
When thy pulse quailed in the nights we know.

“Yet O my heart, thy shame has a mate
Who will not leave thee desolate.
Shame for shame, yea and sin for sin:
Yet peace at length may our poor souls win
If love for love be found therein.

“O thou who seek'st our shrift to-day,”
She cried, “O James of Heronhaye —
Thy sin and mine was for love alone;
And oh! in the sight of God 'tis known
How the heart has since made heavy moan.

“Three days yet!” she said to her heart;
“But then he comes, and we will not part.
God, God be thanked that I still could see!
Oh! he shall come back assuredly,
But where, alas! must he seek for me?”

“O my heart, what road shall we roam
Till my wedding-music fetch me home?
For love's shut from us and bides afar,
And scorn leans over the bitter bar
And knows us now for the thing we are.”

ROSE MARY

Tall she stood with a cheek flushed high
And a gaze to burn the heart-strings by.
'Twas the lightning-flash o'er sky and plain
Ere labouring thunders heave the chain
From the floodgates of the drowning rain.

The mother looked on the daughter still
As on a hurt thing that's yet to kill.
Then wildly at length the pent tears came ;
The love swelled high with the swollen shame,
And their hearts' tempest burst on them.

Closely locked, they clung without speech,
And the mirrored souls shook each to each,
As the cloud-moon and the water-moon
Shake face to face when the dim stars swoon
In stormy bowers of the night's mid-noon.

They swayed together, shuddering sore,
Till the mother's heart could bear no more.
'Twas death to feel her own breast shake
Even to the very throb and ache
Of the burdened heart she still must break.

All her sobs ceased suddenly,
And she sat straight up but scarce could see.
"O daughter, where should my speech begin?
Your heart held fast its secret sin :
How think you, child, that I read therein?"

ROSE MARY

“ Ah me ! but I thought not how it came
When your words showed that you knew my shame :
And now that you call me still your own,
I half forget you have ever known.
Did you read my heart in the Beryl-stone ? ”

The lady answered her mournfully :—
“ The Beryl-stone has no voice for me :
But when you charged its power to show
The truth which none but the pure may know,
Did naught speak once of a coming woe ? ”

Her hand was close to her daughter's heart,
And it felt the life-blood's sudden start :
A quick deep breath did the damsel draw,
Like the struck fawn in the oakenshaw :
“ O mother,” she cried, “ but still I saw ! ”

“ O child, my child, why held you apart
From my great love your hidden heart ?
Said I not that all sin must chase
From the spell's sphere the spirits of grace,
And yield their rule to the evil race ? ”

“ Ah ! would to God I had clearly told
How strong those powers, accurst of old :
Their heart is the ruined house of lies ;
O girl, they can seal the sinful eyes,
Or show the truth by contraries ! ”

ROSE MARY

The daughter sat as cold as a stone,
And spoke no word but gazed alone,
Nor moved, though her mother strove a space
To clasp her round in a close embrace,
Because she dared not see her face.

“ Oh ! ” at last did the mother cry,
“ Be sure, as he loved you, so will I !
Ah ! still and dumb is the bride, I trow ;
But cold and stark as the winter snow
Is the bridegroom’s heart, laid dead below !

“ Daughter, daughter, remember you
That cloud in the hills by Holycleugh ?
’Twas a Hell-screen hiding truth away :
There, not i’ the vale, the ambush lay,
And thence was the dead borne home to-day.”

Deep the flood and heavy the shock
When sea meets sea in the riven rock :
But calm is the pulse that shakes the sea
To the prisoned tide of doom set free
In the breaking heart of Rose Mary.

Once she sprang as the heifer springs
With the wolf’s teeth at its red heart-strings :
First ’twas fire in her breast and brain,
And then scarce hers but the whole world’s pain,
As she gave one shriek and sank again.

ROSE MARY

In the hair dark-waved the face lay white
As the moon lies in the lap of night ;
And as night through which no moon may dart
Lies on a pool in the woods apart,
So lay the swoon on the weary heart.

The lady felt for the bosom's stir,
And wildly kissed and called on her ;
Then turned away with a quick footfall,
And slid the secret door in the wall,
And clomb the strait stair's interval.

There above in the altar-cell
A little fountain rose and fell :
She set a flask to the water's flow,
And, backward hurrying, sprinkled now
The still cold breast and the pallid brow.

Scarce cheek that warmed or breath on the air,
Yet something told that life was there.
“ Ah ! not with the heart the body dies ! ”
The lady moaned in a bitter wise ;
Then wrung her hands and hid her eyes.

“ Alas ! and how may I meet again
In the same poor eyes the self-same pain ?
What help can I seek, such grief to guide ?
Ah ! one alone might avail, ” she cried, —
“ The priest who prays at the dead man's side. ”

ROSE MARY

The lady arose, and sped down all
The winding stairs to the castle-hall.
Long-known valley and wood and stream,
As the loopholes passed, naught else did seem
Than the torn threads of a broken dream.

The hall was full of the castle-folk ;
The women wept, but the men scarce spoke.
As the lady crossed the rush-strewn floor,
The throng fell backward, murmuring sore,
And pressed outside round the open door.

A stranger shadow hung on the hall
Than the dark pomp of a funeral.
'Mid common sights that were there always,
As 'twere a chance of the passing day,
On the ingle-bench the dead man lay.

A priest who passed by Holycleugh
The tidings brought when the day was new.
He guided them who had fetched the dead ;
And since that hour, unwearied,
He knelt in prayer at the low bier's head.

Word had gone to his own domain
That in evil wise the knight was slain :
Soon the spears must gather apace
And the hunt be hard on the hunters' trace ;
But all things yet lay still for a space.

ROSE MARY

As the lady's hurried step drew near,
The kneeling priest looked up to her.
"Father, death is a grievous thing;
But oh! the woe has a sharper sting
That craves by me your ministering.

"Alas for the child that should have wed
This noble knight here lying dead!
Dead in hope, with all blessed boon
Of love thus rent from her heart ere noon,
I left her laid in a heavy swoon.

"O haste to the open bower-chamber
That's topmost as you mount the stair:
Seek her, father, ere yet she wake;
Your words, not mine, be the first to slake
This poor heart's fire, for Christ's sweet sake!"

"God speed!" she said as the priest passed through,
"And I ere long will be with you."
Then low on the hearth her knees sank prone;
She signed all folk from the threshold-stone,
And gazed in the dead man's face alone.

The fight for life found record yet
In the clenched lips and the teeth hard-set;
The wrath from the bent brow was not gone,
And stark in the eyes the hate still shone
Of that they last had looked upon.

ROSE MARY

The blazoned coat was rent on his breast
Where the golden field was goodliest ;
But the shivered sword, close-gripped, could tell
That the blood shed round him where he fell
Was not all his in the distant dell.

The lady recked of the corpse no whit,
But saw the soul and spoke to it :
A light there was in her steadfast eyes,—
The fire of mortal tears and sighs
That pity and love immortalize.

“ By thy death have I learnt to-day
Thy deed, O James of Heronhaye !
Great wrong thou hast done to me and mine ;
And haply God hath wrought for a sign
By our blind deed this doom of thine.

“ Thy shrift, alas ! thou wast not to win ;
But may death shrive thy soul herein !
Full well do I know thy love should be
Even yet — had life but stayed with thee —
Our honour's strong security.”

She stooped, and said with a sob's low stir,—
“ Peace be thine,— but what peace for her ?”
But ere to the brow her lips were press'd,
She marked, half-hid in the riven vest,
A packet close to the dead man's breast.

ROSE MARY

'Neath surcoat pierced and broken mail
It lay on the blood-stained bosom pale.
The clot clung round it, dull and dense,
And a faintness seized her mortal sense
As she reached her hand and drew it thence.

'Twas steeped in the heart's flood welling high
From the heart it there had rested by :
'Twas glued to a broidered fragment gay,—
A shred by spear-thrust rent away
From the heron-wings of Heronhaye.

She gazed on the thing with piteous eyne :—
“Alas, poor child, some pledge of thine !
Ah me ! in this troth the hearts were twain,
And one hath ebbed to this crimson stain,
And when shall the other throb again ?”

She opened the packet heedfully ;
The blood was stiff, and it scarce might be.
She found but a folded paper there,
And round it, twined with tenderest care,
A long bright tress of golden hair.

Even as she looked, she saw again
That dark-haired face in its swoon of pain :
It seemed a snake with a golden sheath
Crept near, as a slow flame flickereth,
And stung her daughter's heart to death.

ROSE MARY

She loosed the tress, but her hand did shake
As though indeed she had touched a snake;
And next she undid the paper's fold,
But that too trembled in her hold,
And the sense scarce grasped the tale it told.

“My heart's sweet lord,” ('twas thus she read,)
“At length our love is garlanded.
At Holy Cross, within eight days' space,
I seek my shrift; and the time and place
Shall fit thee too for thy soul's good grace.

“From Holycleugh on the seventh day
My brother rides, and bides away:
And long or e'er he is back, mine own,
Afar where the face of fear's unknown
We shall be safe with our love alone.

“Ere yet at the shrine my knees I bow,
I shear one tress for our holy vow.
As round these words these threads I wind,
So, eight days hence, shall our loves be twined,
Says my lord's poor lady, JOCELIND.”

She read it twice, with a brain in thrall,
And then its echo told her all.
O'er brows low-fall'n her hands she drew:—
“O God!” she said, as her hands fell too,—
“The Warden's sister of Holycleugh!”

ROSE MARY

She rose upright with a long low moan,
And stared in the dead man's face new-known.
Had it lived indeed? She scarce could tell :
'Twas a cloud where fiends had come to dwell,—
A mask that hung on the gate of Hell.

She lifted the lock of gleaming hair
And smote the lips and left it there.
“ Here's gold that Hell shall take for thy toll !
Full well hath thy treason found its goal,
O thou dead body and damnèd soul ! ”

She turned, sore dazed, for a voice was near,
And she knew that some one called to her.
On many a column fair and tall
A high court ran round the castle-hall ;
And thence it was that the priest did call.

“ I sought your child where you bade me go,
And in rooms around and rooms below ;
But where, alas ! may the maiden be ?
Fear nought,—we shall find her speedily,—
But come, come hither, and seek with me.”

She reached the stair like a lifelorn thing,
But hastened upward murmuring :—
“ Yea, Death's is a face that's fell to see ;
But bitterer pang Life hoards for thee,
Thou broken heart of Rose Mary ! ”

ROSE MARY

BERYL-SONG

*We whose throne is the Beryl,
Dire-gifted spirits of fire,
Who for a twin
Leash Sorrow to Sin,
Who on no flower refrain to lour with peril,—
We cry,— O desolate daughter!
Thou and thy mother share newer shame with each other
Than last night's slaughter.
Awake and tremble, for our curses assemble!
What more, that thou know'st not yet,—
That life nor death shall forget?
No help from Heaven,—thy woes heart-riven are sterile!
O, once a maiden,
With yet worse sorrow can any morrow be laden?
It waits for thee,
It looms, it must be,
O lost among women,—
It comes and thou canst not flee.
Amen to the omen,
Says the voice of the Beryl.
Thou sleep'st? Awake,—
What dar'st thou yet for his sake,
Who each for other did God's own Future imperil?
Dost dare to live
'Mid the pangs each hour must give?*

ROSE MARY

*Nay, rather die, —
With him thy lover 'neath Hell's cloud-cover to fly, —
 Hopeless, yet not apart,
 Cling heart to heart,
And beat through the nether storm-eddying winds
 together?
 Shall this be so?
There thou shalt meet him, but may'st thou greet him?
 ah no!
He loves, but thee he hoped never more to see, —
 He sighed as he died,
 But with never a thought for thee.
 Alone!
 Alone, for ever alone, —
Whose eyes were such wondrous spies for the fate
 foreshown!
 Lo! have not We leashed the twin
 Of endless Sorrow to Sin, —
Who on no flower refrain to lour with peril, —
 Dire-gifted spirits of fire,
 We whose throne is the Beryl?*

ROSE MARY

PART III

A SWOON that breaks is the whelming wave
When help comes late but still can save.
With all blind throes is the instant rife, —
Hurling clangour and clouds at strife, —
The breath of death, but the kiss of life.

The night lay deep on Rose Mary's heart,
For her swoon was death's kind counterpart :
The dawn broke dim on Rose Mary's soul, —
No hill-crown's heavenly aureole,
But a wild gleam on a shaken shoal.

Her senses gasped in the sudden air,
And she looked around, but none was there.
She felt the slackening frost distil
Through her blood the last ooze dull and chill :
Her lids were dry and her lips were still.

Her tears had flooded her heart again ;
As after a long day's bitter rain,
At dusk when the wet flower-cups shrink,
The drops run in from the beaded brink,
And all the close-shut petals drink.

ROSE MARY

Again her sighs on her heart were rolled ;
As the wind that long has swept the wold, —
Whose moan was made with the moaning sea, —
Beats out its breath in the last torn tree,
And sinks at length in lethargy.

She knew she had waded bosom-deep
Along death's bank in the sedge of sleep :
All else was lost to her clouded mind ;
Nor, looking back, could she see defin'd
O'er the dim dumb waste what lay behind.

Slowly fades the sun from the wall
Till day lies dead on the sun-dial :
And now in Rose Mary's lifted eye
'Twas shadow alone that made reply
To the set face of the soul's dark sky.

Yet still through her soul there wandered past
Dread phantoms borne on a wailing blast, —
Death and sorrow and sin and shame ;
And, murmured still, to her lips there came
Her mother's and her lover's name.

How to ask, and what thing to know?
She might not stay and she dared not go.
From fires unseen these smoke-clouds curled ;
But where did the hidden curse lie furled?
And how to seek through the weary world?

ROSE MARY

With toiling breath she rose from the floor
And dragged her steps to an open door :
’Twas the secret panel standing wide,
As the lady’s hand had let it bide
In hastening back to her daughter’s side.

She passed, but reeled with a dizzy brain
And smote the door which closed again.
She stood within by the darkling stair,
But her feet might mount more freely there,—
’Twas the open light most blinded her.

Within her mind no wonder grew
At the secret path she never knew :
All ways alike were strange to her now,—
One field bare-ridged from the spirit’s plough,
One thicket black with the cypress-bough.

Once she thought that she heard her name ;
And she paused, but knew not whence it came.
Down the shadowed stair a faint ray fell
That guided the weary footsteps well
Till it led her up to the altar-cell.

No change there was on Rose Mary’s face
As she leaned in the portal’s narrow space :
Still she stood by the pillar’s stem,
Hand and bosom and garment’s hem,
As the soul stands by at the requiem.

ROSE MARY

The altar-cell was a dome low-lit,
And a veil hung in the midst of it :
At the pole-points of its circling girth
Four symbols stood of the world's first birth,—
Air and water and fire and earth.

To the north, a fountain glittered free ;
To the south, there glowed a red fruit-tree ;
To the east, a lamp flamed high and fair ;
To the west, a crystal casket rare
Held fast a cloud of the fields of air.

The painted walls were a mystic show
Of time's ebb-tide and overflow ;
His hoards long-locked and conquering key,
His service-fires that in heaven be,
And earth-wheels whirled perpetually.

Rose Mary gazed from the open door
As on idle things she cared not for,—
The fleeting shapes of an empty tale ;
Then stepped with a heedless visage pale,
And lifted aside the altar-veil.

The altar stood from its curved recess
In a coiling serpent's life-likeness :
Even such a serpent evermore
Lies deep asleep at the world's dark core
Till the last Voice shake the sea and shore.

ROSE MARY

From the altar-cloth a book rose spread
And tapers burned at the altar-head ;
And there in the altar-midst alone,
'Twixt wings of a sculptured beast unknown,
Rose Mary saw the Beryl-stone.

Firm it sat 'twixt the hollowed wings,
As an orb sits in the hand of kings :
And lo ! for that Foe whose curse far-flown
Had bound her life with a burning zone,
Rose Mary knew the Beryl-stone.

Dread is the meteor's blazing sphere
When the poles throb to its blind career ;
But not with a light more grim and ghast
Thereby is the future doom forecast,
Than now this sight brought back the past.

The hours and minutes seemed to whirr
In a clanging swarm that deafened her ;
They stung her heart to a writhing flame,
And marshalled past in its glare they came,—
Death and sorrow and sin and shame.

Round the Beryl's sphere she saw them pass
And mock her eyes from the fated glass :
One by one in a fiery train
The dead hours seemed to wax and wane,
And burned till all was known again.

ROSE MARY

From the drained heart's fount there rose no cry,
There sprang no tears, for the source was dry.
Held in the hand of some heavy law,
Her eyes she might not once withdraw
Nor shrink away from the thing she saw.

Even as she gazed, through all her blood
The flame was quenched in a coming flood :
Out of the depth of the hollow gloom
On her soul's bare sands she felt it boom,—
The measured tide of a sea of doom.

Three steps she took through the altar-gate,
And her neck reared and her arms grew straight :
The sinews clenched like a serpent's throe,
And the face was white in the dark hair's flow,
As her hate beheld what lay below.

Dumb she stood in her malisons,—
A silver statue tressed with bronze :
As the fabled head by Perseus mown,
It seemed in sooth that her gaze alone
Had turned the carven shapes to stone.

O'er the altar-sides on either hand
There hung a dinted helm and brand :
By strength thereof, 'neath the Sacred Sign,
That bitter gift o'er the salt sea-brine
Her father brought from Palestine.

ROSE MARY

Rose Mary moved with a stern accord
And reached her hand to her father's sword ;
Nor did she stir her gaze one whit
From the thing whereon her brows were knit ;
But gazing still, she spoke to it.

“ O ye, three times accurst,” she said,
“ By whom this stone is tenanted !
Lo ! here ye came by a strong sin's might ;
Yet a sinner's hand that's weak to smite
Shall send you hence ere the day be night.

“ This hour a clear voice bade me know
My hand shall work your overthrow :
Another thing in mine ear it spake,—
With the broken spell my life shall break.
I thank Thee, God, for the dear death's sake !

“ And he Thy heavenly minister
Who swayed erewhile this spell-bound sphere,—
My parting soul let him haste to greet,
And none but he be guide for my feet
To where Thy rest is made complete.”

Then deep she breathed, with a tender moan :—
“ My love, my lord, my only one !
Even as I held the cursed clue,
When thee, through me, these foul ones slew,—
By mine own deed shall they slay me too !

ROSE MARY

“ Even while they speed to Hell, my love,
Two hearts shall meet in Heaven above.
Our shrift thou sought'st, but might'st not bring :
And oh ! for me 'tis a blessed thing
To work hereby our ransoming.

“ One were our hearts in joy and pain,
And our souls e'en now grow one again.
And O my love, if our souls are three,
O thine and mine shall the third soul be,—
One threefold love eternally.”

Her eyes were soft as she spoke apart,
And the lips smiled to the broken heart :
But the glance was dark and the forehead scored
With the bitter frown of hate restored,
As her two hands swung the heavy sword.

Three steps back from her Foe she trod :—
“ Love, for thy sake ! In Thy Name, O God ! ”
In the fair white hands small strength was shown ;
Yet the blade flashed high and the edge fell prone,
And she cleft the heart of the Beryl-stone.

What living flesh in the thunder-cloud
Hath sat and felt heaven cry aloud ?
Or known how the levin's pulse may beat ?
Or wrapped the hour when the whirlwinds meet
About its breast for a winding-sheet ?

ROSE MARY

Who hath crouched at the world's deep heart
While the earthquake rends its loins apart?
Or walked far under the seething main
While overhead the heavens ordain
The tempest-towers of the hurricane?

Who hath seen or what ear hath heard
The secret things unregister'd
Of the place where all is past and done
And tears and laughter sound as one
In Hell's unhallowed unison?

Nay, is it writ how the fiends despair
In earth and water and fire and air?
Even so no mortal tongue may tell
How to the clang of the sword that fell
The echoes shook the altar-cell.

When all was still on the air again
The Beryl-stone lay cleft in twain ;
The veil was rent from the riven dome ;
And every wind that's winged to roam
Might have the ruined place for home.

The fountain no more glittered free ;
The fruit hung dead on the leafless tree ;
The flame of the lamp had ceased to flare ;
And the crystal casket shattered there
Was emptied now of its cloud of air.

ROSE MARY

And lo! on the ground Rose Mary lay,
With a cold brow like the snows ere May,
With a cold breast like the earth till Spring,
With such a smile as the June days bring
When the year grows warm for harvesting.

The death she had won might leave no trace
On the soft sweet form and gentle face :
In a gracious sleep she seemed to lie ;
And over her head her hand on high
Held fast the sword she triumphed by.

'Twas then a clear voice said in the room :—
“ Behold the end of the heavy doom.
O come, — for thy bitter love’s sake blest ;
By a sweet path now thou journeyest,
And I will lead thee to thy rest.

“ Me thy sin by Heaven’s sore ban
Did chase erewhile from the talisman :
But to my heart, as a conquered home,
In glory of strength thy footsteps come
Who hast thus cast forth my foes therefrom.

“ Already thy heart remembereth
No more his name thou sought’st in death :
For under all deeps, all heights above, —
So wide the gulf in the midst thereof, —
Are Hell of Treason and Heaven of Love.

ROSE MARY

“ Thee, true soul, shall thy truth prefer
To blessed Mary’s rose-bower :
Warmed and lit is thy place afar
With guerdon-fires of the sweet Love-star
Where hearts of steadfast lovers are :—

“ Though naught for the poor corpse lying here
Remain to-day but the cold white bier,
But burial-chaunt and bended knee,
But sighs and tears that heaviest be,
But rent rose-flower and rosemary.”

ROSE MARY

BERYL-SONG

*We, cast forth from the Beryl,
Gyre-circling spirits of fire,
Whose pangs begin
With God's grace to sin,
For whose spent powers the immortal hours are sterile,—
Woe! must We behold this mother
Find grace in her dead child's face, and doubt of none
other
But that perfect pardon, alas! hath assured her
guerdon?
Woe! must We behold this daughter,
Made clean from the soil of sin wherewith We had
fraught her,
Shake off a man's blood like water?
Write up her story
On the Gate of Heaven's glory,
Whom there We behold so fair in shining apparel,
And beneath her the ruin
Of our own undoing!
Alas, the Beryl!
We had for a foeman
But one weak woman;
In one day's strife,
Her hope fell dead from her life;*

ROSE MARY

*And yet no iron,
Her soul to environ,
Could this manslayer, this false soothsayer imperil!
Lo, where she bows
In the Holy House!
Who now shall dissever her soul from its joy for ever,
While every ditty
Of love and plentiful pity
Fills the White City,
And the floor of Heaven to her feet for ever is given?
Hark, a voice cries "Flee!"
Woe! woe! what shelter have We,
Whose pangs begin
With God's grace to sin,
For whose spent powers the immortal hours are sterile,
Gyre-circling spirits of fire,
We, cast forth from the Beryl?*



THE WHITE SHIP

THE WHITE SHIP

HENRY I. OF ENGLAND — 25TH NOV., 1120

BY none but me can the tale be told,
The butcher of Rouen, poor Berold.
(Lands are swayed by a King on a throne.)

'Twas a royal train put forth to sea,
Yet the tale can be told by none but me.

(The sea hath no King but God alone.)

King Henry held it as life's whole gain
That after his death his son should reign.

'Twas so in my youth I heard men say,
And my old age calls it back to-day.

King Henry of England's realm was he,
And Henry Duke of Normandy.

The times had changed when on either coast
"Clerkly Harry" was all his boast.

Of ruthless strokes full many an one
He had struck to crown himself and his son;
And his elder brother's eyes were gone.

THE WHITE SHIP

And when to the chase his court would crowd,
The poor flung ploughshares on his road,
And shrieked: "Our cry is from King to God!"

But all the chiefs of the English land
Had knelt and kissed the Prince's hand.

And next with his son he sailed to France
To claim the Norman allegiance:

And every baron in Normandy
Had taken the oath of fealty.

'Twas sworn and sealed, and the day had come
When the King and the Prince might journey home:

For Christmas cheer is to home hearts dear,
And Christmas now was drawing near.

Stout Fitz-Stephen came to the King,—
A pilot famous in seafaring;

And he held to the King, in all men's sight,
A mark of gold for his tribute's right.

"Liege Lord! my father guided the ship
From whose boat your father's foot did slip
When he caught the English soil in his grip,

THE WHITE SHIP

“And cried: ‘By this clasp I claim command
O’er every rood of English land!’

“He was borne to the realm you rule o’er now
In that ship with the archer carved at her prow:

“And thither I’ll bear, an’ it be my due,
Your father’s son and his grandson too.

“The famed White Ship is mine in the bay;
From Harfleur’s harbour she sails to-day,

“With masts fair-pennoned as Norman spears
And with fifty well-trying mariners.”

Quoth the King: “My ships are chosen each one,
But I’ll not say nay to Stephen’s son.

“My son and daughter and fellowship
Shall cross the water in the White Ship.”

The King set sail with the eve’s south wind,
And soon he left that coast behind.

The Prince and all his, a princely show,
Remained in the good White Ship to go.

With noble knights and with ladies fair,
With courtiers and sailors gathered there,
Three hundred living souls we were:

THE WHITE SHIP

And I Berold was the meanest hind
In all that train to the Prince assign'd.

The Prince was a lawless shameless youth ;
From his father's loins he sprang without ruth :

Eighteen years till then he had seen,
And the devil's dues in him were eighteen.

And now he cried : " Bring wine from below ;
Let the sailors revel ere yet they row :

" Our speed shall o'ertake my father's flight
Though we sail from the harbour at midnight."

The rowers made good cheer without check ;
The lords and ladies obeyed his beck ;
The night was light, and they danced on the deck.

But at midnight's stroke they cleared the bay,
And the White Ship furrowed the water-way.

The sails were set, and the oars kept tune
To the double flight of the ship and the moon :

Swifter and swifter the White Ship sped
Till she flew as the spirit flies from the dead :

As white as a lily glimmered she
Like a ship's fair ghost upon the sea.

THE WHITE SHIP

And the Prince cried, "Friends, 'tis the hour to sing!
Is a songbird's course so swift on the wing?"

And under the winter stars' still throng,
From brown throats, white throats, merry and strong,
The knights and the ladies raised a song.

A song, — nay, a shriek that rent the sky,
That leaped o'er the deep! — the grievous cry
Of three hundred living that now must die.

An instant shriek that sprang to the shock
As the ship's keel felt the sunken rock.

'Tis said that afar — a shrill strange sigh —
The King's ships heard it and knew not why.

Pale Fitz-Stephen stood by the helm
'Mid all those folk that the waves must overwhelm.

A great King's heir for the waves to overwhelm,
And the helpless pilot pale at the helm!

The ship was eager and sucked athirst,
By the stealthy stab of the sharp reef pierc'd:

And like the moil round a sinking cup,
The waters against her crowded up.

THE WHITE SHIP

A moment the pilot's senses spin, —
The next he snatched the Prince 'mid the din,
Cut the boat loose, and the youth leaped in.

A few friends leaped with him, standing near.
“ Row ! the sea's smooth and the night is clear ! ”

“ What ! none to be saved but these and I ? ”
“ Row, row as you'd live ! All here must die ! ”

Out of the churn of the choking ship,
Which the gulf grapples and the waves strip,
They struck with the strained oars' flash and dip.

'Twas then o'er the splitting bulwarks' brim
The Prince's sister screamed to him.

He gazed aloft, still rowing apace,
And through the whirled surf he knew her face.

To the toppling decks clave one and all
As a fly cleaves to a chamber-wall.

I Berold was clinging anear ;
I prayed for myself and quaked with fear,
But I saw his eyes as he looked at her.

He knew her face and he heard her cry,
And he said, “ Put back ! she must not die ! ”

THE WHITE SHIP

And back with the current's force they reel
Like a leaf that's drawn to a water-wheel.

'Neath the ship's travail they scarce might float,
But he rose and stood in the rocking boat.

Low the poor ship leaned on the tide :
O'er the naked keel as she best might slide,
The sister toiled to the brother's side.

He reached an oar to her from below,
And stiffened his arms to clutch her so.

But now from the ship some spied the boat,
And "Saved!" was the cry from many a throat.

And down to the boat they leaped and fell :
It turned as a bucket turns in a well,
And nothing was there but the surge and swell.

The Prince that was and the King to come,
There in an instant gone to his doom,

Despite of all England's bended knee
And maugre the Norman fealty !

He was a Prince of lust and pride ;
He showed no grace till the hour he died.

THE WHITE SHIP

When he should be King, he oft would vow,
He'd yoke the peasant to his own plough.
O'er him the ships score their furrows now.

God only knows where his soul did wake,
But I saw him die for his sister's sake.

By none but me can the tale be told,
The butcher of Rouen, poor Berold.
(Lands are swayed by a King on a throne.)
'Twas a royal train put forth to sea,
Yet the tale can be told by none but me.
(The sea hath no King but God alone.)

And now the end came o'er the waters' womb
Like the last great Day that's yet to come.

With prayers in vain and curses in vain,
The White Ship sundered on the mid-main :

And what were men and what was a ship
Were toys and splinters in the sea's grip.

I Berold was down in the sea ;
And passing strange though the thing may be,
Of dreams then known I remember me.

Blithe is the shout on Harfleur's strand
When morning lights the sails to land :

THE WHITE SHIP

And blithe is Honfleur's echoing gloam
When mothers call the children home :

And high do the bells of Rouen beat
When the Body of Christ goes down the street.

These things and the like were heard and shown
In a moment's trance 'neath the sea alone ;

And when I rose, 'twas the sea did seem,
And not these things, to be all a dream.

The ship was gone and the crowd was gone,
And the deep shuddered and the moon shone :

And in a strait grasp my arms did span
The mainyard rent from the mast where it ran ;
And on it with me was another man.

Where lands were none 'neath the dim sea-sky,
We told our names, that man and I.

“O I am Godefroy de l'Aigle hight,
And son I am to a belted knight.”

“And I am Berold the butcher's son
Who slays the beasts in Rouen town.”

Then cried we upon God's name, as we
Did drift on the bitter winter sea.

THE WHITE SHIP

But lo! a third man rose o'er the wave,
And we said, "Thank God! us three may He save!"

He clutched to the yard with panting stare,
And we looked and knew Fitz-Stephen there.

He clung, and "What of the Prince?" quoth he.
"Lost, lost!" we cried. He cried, "Woe on me!"
And loosed his hold and sank through the sea.

And soul with soul again in that space
We two were together face to face:

And each knew each, as the moments sped,
Less for one living than for one dead:

And every still star overhead
Seemed an eye that knew we were but dead.

And the hours passed; till the noble's son
Sighed, "God be thy help! my strength's foredone!"

"O farewell, friend, for I can no more!"
"Christ take thee!" I moaned; and his life was o'er.

Three hundred souls were all lost but one,
And I drifted over the sea alone.

THE WHITE SHIP

At last the morning rose on the sea
Like an angel's wing that beat tow'rds me.

Sore numbed I was in my sheepskin coat ;
Half dead I hung, and might nothing note,
Till I woke sun-warmed in a fisher-boat.

The sun was high o'er the eastern brim
As I praised God and gave thanks to Him.

That day I told my tale to a priest,
Who charged me, till the shrift were releas'd,
That I should keep it in mine own breast.

And with the priest I thence did fare
To King Henry's court at Winchester.

We spoke with the King's high chamberlain,
And he wept and mourned again and again,
As if his own son had been slain :

And round us ever there crowded fast
Great men with faces all aghast :

And who so bold that might tell the thing
Which now they knew to their lord the King?
Much woe I learnt in their communing.

THE WHITE SHIP

The King had watched with a heart sore stirred
For two whole days, and this was the third :

And still to all his court would he say,
“ What keeps my son so long away ? ”

And they said : “ The ports lie far and wide
That skirt the swell of the English tide ;

“ And England’s cliffs are not more white
Than her women are, and scarce so light
Her skies as their eyes are blue and bright ;

“ And in some port that he reached from France
The Prince has lingered for his pleasaunce.”

But once the King asked : “ What distant cry
Was that we heard ’twixt the sea and sky ? ”

And one said : “ With suchlike shouts, pardie !
Do the fishers fling their nets at sea.”

And one : “ Who knows not the shrieking quest
When the sea-mew misses its young from the nest ? ”

’Twas thus till now they had soothed his dread,
Albeit they knew not what they said :

THE WHITE SHIP

But who should speak to-day of the thing
That all knew there except the King?

Then pondering much they found a way,
And met round the King's high seat that day :

And the King sat with a heart sore stirred,
And seldom he spoke and seldom heard.

'Twas then through the hall the King was 'ware
Of a little boy with golden hair,

As bright as the golden poppy is
That the beach breeds for the surf to kiss :

Yet pale his cheek as the thorn in Spring,
And his garb black like the raven's wing.

Nothing heard but his foot through the hall,
For now the lords were silent all.

And the King wondered, and said, "Alack!
Who sends me a fair boy dressed in black?"

"Why, sweet heart, do you pace through the hall
As though my court were a funeral?"

Then lowly knelt the child at the dais,
And looked up weeping in the King's face.

THE WHITE SHIP

“ O wherefore black, O King, ye may say,
For white is the hue of death to-day.

“ Your son and all his fellowship
Lie low in the sea with the White Ship.”

King Henry fell as a man struck dead ;
And speechless still he stared from his bed
When to him next day my rede I read.

There's many an hour must needs beguile
A King's high heart that he should smile,—

Full many a lordly hour, full fain
Of his realm's rule and pride of his reign :—

But this King never smiled again.

By none but me can the tale be told,
The butcher of Rouen, poor Berold.

(Lands are swayed by a King on a throne.)

’Twas a royal train put forth to sea,

Yet the tale can be told by none but me.

(The sea hath no King but God alone.)

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

NOTE

TRADITION says that Catherine Douglas, in honour of her heroic act when she barred the door with her arm against the murderers of James the First of Scots, received popularly the name of "Barlass." This name remains to her descendants, the Barlas family, in Scotland, who bear for their crest a broken arm. She married Alexander Lovell of Bolunnie.

A few stanzas from King James's lovely poem, known as *The King's Quhair*, are quoted in the course of this ballad. The writer must express regret for the necessity which has compelled him to shorten the ten-syllabled lines to eight syllables, in order that they might harmonize with the ballad metre.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

JAMES I. OF SCOTS — 20TH FEBRUARY, 1437

I CATHERINE am a Douglas born,
A name to all Scots dear ;
And Kate Barlass they've called me now
Through many a waning year.

This old arm's withered now. 'Twas once
Most deft 'mong maidens all
To rein the steed, to wing the shaft,
To smite the palm-play ball.

In hall adown the close-linked dance
It has shone most white and fair ;
It has been the rest for a true lord's head,
And many a sweet babe's nursing-bed,
And the bar to a King's chambère.

Aye, lasses, draw round Kate Barlass,
And hark with bated breath
How good King James, King Robert's son,
Was foully done to death.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

Through all the days of his gallant youth
The princely James was pent,
By his friends at first and then by his foes,
In long imprisonment.

For the elder Prince, the kingdom's heir,
By treason's murderous brood
Was slain; and the father quaked for the child
With the royal mortal blood.

I' the Bass Rock fort, by his father's care,
Was his childhood's life assured;
And Henry the subtle Bolingbroke,
Proud England's King, 'neath the southron yoke
His youth for long years immured.

Yet in all things meet for a kingly man
Himself did he approve;
And the nightingale through his prison-wall
Taught him both lore and love.

For once, when the bird's song drew him close
To the opened window-pane,
In her bowers beneath a lady stood,
A light of life to his sorrowful mood,
Like a lily amid the rain.

And for her sake, to the sweet bird's note,
He framed a sweeter Song,

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

More sweet than ever a poet's heart
Gave yet to the English tongue.

She was a lady of royal blood ;
And when, past sorrow and teen,
He stood where still through his crownless years
His Scottish realm had been,
At Scone were the happy lovers crowned,
A heart-wed King and Queen.

But the bird may fall from the bough of youth,
And song be turned to moan,
And Love's storm-cloud be the shadow of Hate,
When the tempest-waves of a troubled State
Are beating against a throne.

Yet well they loved ; and the god of Love,
Whom well the King had sung,
Might find on the earth no truer hearts
His lowliest swains among.

From the days when first she rode abroad
With Scottish maids in her train,
I Catherine Douglas won the trust
Of my mistress sweet Queen Jane.

And oft she sighed, "To be born a King!"
And oft along the way

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

When she saw the homely lovers pass
She has said, "Alack the day!"

Years waned, — the loving and toiling years :
Till England's wrong renewed
Drove James, by outrage cast on his crown,
To the open field of feud.

'Twas when the King and his host were met
At the leaguer of Roxbro' hold,
The Queen o' the sudden sought his camp
With a tale of dread to be told.

And she showed him a secret letter writ
That spoke of treasonous strife,
And how a band of his noblest lords
Were sworn to take his life.

"And it may be here or it may be there,
In the camp or the court," she said :
"But for my sake come to your people's arms
And guard your royal head."

Quoth he, "'Tis the fifteenth day of the siege,
And the castle's nigh to yield."
"O face your foes on your throne," she cried,
"And show the power you wield ;
And under your Scottish people's love
You shall sit as under your shield."

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

At the fair Queen's side I stood that day
When he bade them raise the siege,
And back to his Court he sped to know
How the lords would meet their Liege.

But when he summoned his Parliament,
The louring brows hung round,
Like clouds that circle the mountain-head
Ere the first low thunders sound.

For he had tamed the nobles' lust
And curbed their power and pride,
And reached out an arm to right the poor
Through Scotland far and wide ;
And many a lordly wrong-doer
By the headsman's axe had died.

'Twas then upspoke Sir Robert Græme,
The bold o'ermastering man :—
“ O King, in the name of your Three Estates
I set you under their ban !

“ For, as your lords made oath to you
Of service and fealty,
Even in like wise you pledged your oath
Their faithful sire to be :—

“ Yet all we here that are nobly sprung
Have mourned dear kith and kin

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

Since first for the Scottish Barons' curse
Did your bloody rule begin."

With that he laid his hands on his King :—
" Is this not so, my lords?"
But of all who had sworn to league with him
Not one spake back to his words.

Quoth the King :— " Thou speak'st but for one Estate,
Nor doth it avow thy gage.
Let my liege lords hale this traitor hence !"
The Græme fired dark with rage :—
" Who works for lesser men than himself,
He earns but a witless wage !"

But soon from the dungeon where he lay
He won by privy plots,
And forth he fled with a price on his head
To the country of the Wild Scots.

And word there came from Sir Robert Græme
To the King at Edinbro' :—
" No Liege of mine thou art ; but I see
From this day forth alone in thee
God's creature, my mortal foe.

" Through thee are my wife and children lost,
My heritage and lands ;

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

And when my God shall show me a way,
Thyself my mortal foe will I slay
With these my proper hands."

Against the coming of Christmastide
That year the King bade call
I' the Black Friars' Charterhouse of Perth
A solemn festival.

And we of his household rode with him
In a close-ranked company ;
But not till the sun had sunk from his throne
Did we reach the Scottish Sea.

That eve was clenched for a boding storm,
'Neath a toilsome moon half seen ;
The cloud stooped low and the surf rose high ;
And where there was a line of the sky,
Wild wings loomed dark between.

And on a rock of the black beach-side,
By the veiled moon dimly lit,
There was something seemed to heave with life
As the King drew nigh to it.

And was it only the tossing furze
Or brake of the waste sea-wold?

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

Or was it an eagle bent to the blast?
When near we came, we knew it at last
For a woman tattered and old.

But it seemed as though by a fire within
Her writhen limbs were wrung ;
And as soon as the King was close to her,
She stood up gaunt and strong.

'Twas then the moon sailed clear of the rack
On high in her hollow dome ;
And still as aloft with hoary crest
Each clamorous wave rang home,
Like fire in snow the moonlight blazed
Amid the champing foam.

And the woman held his eyes with her eyes :—
“ O King, thou art come at last ;
But thy wraith has haunted the Scottish Sea
To my sight for four years past.

“ Four years it is since first I met,
’Twixt the Duchray and the Dhu,
A shape whose feet clung close in a shroud,
And that shape for thine I knew.

“ A year again, and on Inchkeith Isle
I saw thee pass in the breeze,

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

With the cerecloth risen above thy feet
And wound about thy knees.

“And yet a year, in the Links of Forth,
As a wanderer without rest,
Thou cam'st with both thine arms i' the shroud
That clung high up thy breast.

“And in this hour I find thee here,
And well mine eyes may note
That the winding-sheet hath passed thy breast
And risen around thy throat.

“And when I meet thee again, O King,
That of death hast such sore drouth, —
Except thou turn again on this shore, —
The winding-sheet shall have moved once more
And covered thine eyes and mouth.

“O King, whom poor men bless for their King,
Of thy fate be not so fain;
But these my words for God's message take,
And turn thy steed, O King, for her sake
Who rides beside thy rein!”

While the woman spoke, the King's horse reared
As if it would breast the sea,
And the Queen turned pale as she heard on the gale
The voice die dolorously.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

When the woman ceased, the steed was still,
But the King gazed on her yet,
And in silence save for the wail of the sea
His eyes and her eyes met.

At last he said : — “ God's ways are His own ;
Man is but shadow and dust.
Last night I prayed by His altar-stone ;
To-night I wend to the Feast of His Son ;
And in Him I set my trust.

“ I have held my people in sacred charge,
And have not feared the sting
Of proud men's hate, — to His will resign'd
Who has but one same death for a hind
And one same death for a King.

“ And if God in His wisdom have brought close
The day when I must die,
That day by water or fire or air
My feet shall fall in the destined snare
Wherever my road may lie.

“ What man can say but the Fiend hath set
Thy sorcery on my path,
My heart with the fear of death to fill,
And turn me against God's very will
To sink in His burning wrath? ”

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

The woman stood as the train rode past,
And moved nor limb nor eye ;
And when we were shipped, we saw her there
Still standing against the sky.

As the ship made way, the moon once more
Sank slow in her rising pall ;
And I thought of the shrouded wraith of the King,
And I said, "The Heavens know all."

And now, ye lasses, must ye hear
How my name is Kate Barlass : —
But a little thing, when all the tale
Is told of the weary mass
Of crime and woe which in Scotland's realm
God's will let come to pass.

'Twas in the Charterhouse of Perth
That the King and all his Court
Were met, the Christmas Feast being done,
For solace and disport.

'Twas a wind-wild eve in February,
And against the casement-pane
The branches smote like summoning hands
And muttered the driving rain.

And when the wind swooped over the lift
And made the whole heaven frown,

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

It seemed a grip was laid on the walls
To tug the housetop down.

And the Queen was there, more stately fair
Than a lily in garden set;
And the King was loth to stir from her side;
For as on the day when she was his bride,
Even so he loved her yet.

And the Earl of Athole, the King's false friend,
Sat with him at the board;
And Robert Stuart the chamberlain
Who had sold his sovereign Lord.

Yet the traitor Christopher Chaumber there
Would fain have told him all,
And vainly four times that night he strove
To reach the King through the hall.

But the wine is bright at the goblet's brim
Though the poison lurk beneath;
And the apples still are red on the tree
Within whose shade may the adder be
That shall turn thy life to death.

There was a knight of the King's fast friends
Whom he called the King of Love;
And to such bright cheer and courtesy
That name might best behave.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

And the King and Queen both loved him well
For his gentle knightliness ;
And with him the King, as that eve wore on,
Was playing at the chess.

And the King said, (for he thought to jest
And soothe the Queen thereby ;) —
“ In a book 'tis writ that this same year
A King shall in Scotland die.

“ And I have pondered the matter o'er,
And this have I found, Sir Hugh, —
There are but two Kings on Scottish ground,
And those Kings are I and you.

“ And I have a wife and a newborn heir,
And you are yourself alone ;
So stand you stark at my side with me
To guard our double throne.

“ For here sit I and my wife and child,
As well your heart shall approve,
In full surrender and soothfastness,
Beneath your Kingdom of Love.”

And the Knight laughed, and the Queen too smiled ;
But I knew her heavy thought,
And I strove to find in the good King's jest
What cheer might thence be wrought.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

And I said, " My Liege, for the Queen's dear love
Now sing the song that of old
You made, when a captive Prince you lay,
And the nightingale sang sweet on the spray,
In Windsor's castle-hold."

Then he smiled the smile I knew so well
When he thought to please the Queen ;
The smile which under all bitter frowns
Of fate that rose between,
For ever dwelt at the poet's heart
Like the bird of love unseen.

And he kissed her hand and took his harp,
And the music sweetly rang ;
And when the song burst forth, it seemed
'Twas the nightingale that sang.

*"Worship, ye lovers, on this May:
Of bliss your kalends are begun:
Sing with us, Away, Winter, away!
Come, Summer, the sweet season and sun!
Awake for shame, — your heaven is won, —
And amorously your heads lift all:
Thank Love, that you to his grace doth call!"*

But when he bent to the Queen, and sang
The speech whose praise was hers,
It seemed his voice was the voice of the Spring
And the voice of the bygone years.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

*“ The fairest and the freshest flower
That ever I saw before that hour,
The which o' the sudden made to start
The blood of my body to my heart.*

* * * * *

*Ah sweet, are ye a worldly creature
Or heavenly thing in form of nature ?”*

And the song was long, and richly stored
With wonder and beauteous things ;
And the harp was tuned to every change.
Of minstrel ministerings ;
But when he spoke of the Queen at the last ;
Its strings were his own heart-strings :

*“ Unworthy but only of her grace,
Upon Love's rock that's easy and sure,
In guerdon of all my lovè's space
She took me her humble creäture.
Thus fell my blissful aventure
In youth of love that from day to day
Flowereth aye new, and further I say.*

*“ To reckon all the circumstance
As it happed when lessen gan my sore,
Of my rancour and woful chance,
It were too long, — I have done therefor.
And of this flower I say no more
But unto my help her heart hath tended
And even from death her man defended.”*

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

“Aye, even from death,” to myself I said ;
For I thought of the day when she
Had borne him the news, at Roxbro' siege,
Of the fell confederacy.

But Death even then took aim as he sang
With an arrow deadly bright ;
And the grinning skull lurked grimly aloof,
And the wings were spread far over the roof
More dark than the winter night.

Yet truly along the amorous song
Of Love's high pomp and state,
There were words of Fortune's trackless doom
And the dreadful face of Fate.

And oft have I heard again in dreams
The voice of dire appeal
In which the King then sang of the pit
That is under Fortune's wheel.

*“ And under the wheel beheld I there
An ugly Pit as deep as hell,
That to behold I quaked for fear :
And this I heard, that who therein fell
Came no more up, tidings to tell :
Whereat, astound of the fearful sight,
I wist not what to do for fright.”*

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

And oft has my thought called up again
These words of the changeful song :—
“ *Wist thou thy pain and thy travail
To come, well might'st thou weep and wail!*”
And our wail, O God ! is long.

But the song's end was all of his love ;
And well his heart was grac'd
With her smiling lips and her tear-bright eyes
As his arm went round her waist.

And on the swell of her long fair throat
Close clung the necklet-chain
As he bent her pearl-tir'd head aside,
And in the warmth of his love and pride
He kissed her lips full fain.

And her true face was a rosy red,
The very red of the rose
That, couched on the happy garden-bed,
In the summer sunlight glows.

And all the wondrous things of love
That sang so sweet through the song
Were in the look that met in their eyes,
And the look was deep and long.

'Twas then a knock came at the outer gate,
And the usher sought the King.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

“The woman you met by the Scottish Sea,
My Liege, would tell you a thing;
And she says that her present need for speech
Will bear no gainsaying.”

And the King said: “The hour is late;
To-morrow will serve, I ween.”
Then he charged the usher strictly, and said:
“No word of this to the Queen.”

But the usher came again to the King.
“Shall I call her back?” quoth he:
“For as she went on her way, she cried,
‘Woe! Woe! then the thing must be!’”

And the King paused, but he did not speak.
Then he called for the Voidee-cup:
And as we heard the twelfth hour strike,
There by true lips and false lips alike
Was the draught of trust drained up.

So with reverence meet to King and Queen,
To bed went all from the board;
And the last to leave of the courtly train
Was Robert Stuart the chamberlain
Who had sold his sovereign lord.

And all the locks of the chamber-door
Had the traitor riven and brast;

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

And that Fate might win sure way from afar,
He had drawn out every bolt and bar
That made the entrance fast.

And now at midnight he stole his way
To the moat of the outer wall,
And laid strong hurdles closely across
Where the traitors' tread should fall.

But we that were the Queen's bower-maids
Alone were left behind ;
And with heed we drew the curtains close
Against the winter wind.

And now that all was still through the hall,
More clearly we heard the rain
That clamoured ever against the glass
And the boughs that beat on the pane.

But the fire was bright in the ingle-nook,
And through empty space around
The shadows cast on the arras'd wall
'Mid the pictured kings stood sudden and tall
Like spectres sprung from the ground.

And the bed was dight in a deep alcove ;
And as he stood by the fire :
The King was still in talk with the Queen.
While he doffed his goodly attire :

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

And the song had brought the image back
Of many a bygone year ;
And many a loving word they said
With hand in hand and head laid to head ;
And none of us went anear.

But Love was weeping outside the house,
A child in the piteous rain ;
And as he watched the arrow of Death,
He wailed for his own shafts close in the sheath
That never should fly again.

And now beneath the window arose
A wild voice suddenly :
And the King reared straight, but the Queen fell back
As for bitter dule to dree ;
And all of us knew the woman's voice
Who spoke by the Scottish Sea.

“ O King,” she cried, “ in an evil hour
They drove me from thy gate ;
And yet my voice must rise to thine ears ;
But alas ! it comes too late !

“ Last night at mid-watch, by Aberdour,
When the moon was dead in the skies,
O King, in a death-light of thine own
I saw thy shape arise.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

“ And in full season, as erst I said,
The doom had gained its growth ;
And the shroud had risen above thy neck
And covered thine eyes and mouth.

“ And no moon woke, but the pale dawn broke,
And still thy soul stood there ;
And I thought its silence cried to my soul
As the first rays crowned its hair.

“ Since then have I journeyed fast and fain
In very despite of Fate,
Lest Hope might still be found in God's will :
But they drove me from thy gate.

“ For every man on God's ground, O King,
His death grows up from his birth
In a shadow-plant perpetually ;
And thine towers high, a black yew-tree,
O'er the Charterhouse of Perth ! ”

That room was built far out from the house ;
And none but we in the room
Might hear the voice that rose beneath,
Nor the tread of the coming doom.

For now there came a torchlight-glare,
And a clang of arms there came ;
And not a soul in that space but thought
Of the foe Sir Robert Græme.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

Yea, from the country of the Wild Scots,
O'er mountain, valley, and glen,
He had brought with him in murderous league
Three hundred armèd men.

The King knew all in an instant's flash ;
And like a King did he stand ;
But there was no armour in all the room,
Nor weapon lay to his hand.

And all we women flew to the door
And thought to have made it fast ;
But the bolts were gone and the bars were gone
And the locks were riven and brast.

And he caught the pale pale Queen in his arms
As the iron footsteps fell,—
Then loosed her, standing alone, and said,
“ Our bliss was our farewell ! ”

And 'twixt his lips he murmured a prayer,
And he crossed his brow and breast ;
And proudly in royal hardihood
Even so with folded arms he stood,—
The prize of the bloody quest.

Then on me leaped the Queen like a deer :—
“ O Catherine, help ! ” she cried.
And low at his feet we clasped his knees
Together side by side.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

“ Oh ! even a King, for his people's sake,
From treasonous death must hide ! ”

“ For *her* sake most ! ” I cried, and I marked
The pang that my words could wring.
And the iron tongs from the chimney-nook
I snatched and held to the King : —
“ Wrench up the plank ! and the vault beneath
Shall yield safe harbouring . ”

With brows low-bent, from my eager hand
The heavy heft did he take ;
And the plank at his feet he wrenched and tore ;
And as he frowned through the open floor,
Again I said, “ For her sake ! ”

Then he cried to the Queen, “ God's will be done ! ”
For her hands were clasped in prayer.
And down he sprang to the inner crypt ;
And straight we closed the plank he had ripp'd
And toiled to smoothe it fair.

(Alas ! in that vault a gap once was
Wherethro' the King might have fled :
But three days since close-walled had it been
By his will ; for the ball would roll therein
When without at the palm he play'd .)

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

Then the Queen cried, "Catherine, keep the door,
And I to this will suffice!"
At her word I rose all dazed to my feet,
And my heart was fire and ice.

And louder ever the voices grew,
And the tramp of men in mail;
Until to my brain it seemed to be
As though I tossed on a ship at sea
In the teeth of a crashing gale.

Then back I flew to the rest; and hard
We strove with sinews knit
To force the table against the door;
But we might not compass it.

Then my wild gaze sped far down the hall
To the place of the hearthstone-sill;
And the Queen bent ever above the floor,
For the plank was rising still.

And now the rush was heard on the stair,
And "God, what help?" was our cry.
And was I frenzied or was I bold?
I looked at each empty stanchion-hold,
And no bar but my arm had I!

Like iron felt my arm, as through
The staple I made it pass:—

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

Alack ! it was flesh and bone — no more !
'Twas Catherine Douglas sprang to the door,
But I fell back Kate Barlass.

With that they all thronged into the hall,
Half dim to my failing ken ;
And the space that was but a void before
Was a crowd of wrathful men.

Behind the door I had fall'n and lay,
Yet my sense was wildly aware,
And for all the pain of my shattered arm
I never fainted there.

Even as I fell, my eyes were cast
Where the King leaped down to the pit ;
And lo ! the plank was smooth in its place,
And the Queen stood far from it.

And under the litters and through the bed
And within the presses all
The traitors sought for the King, and pierced
The arras around the wall.

And through the chamber they ramped and stormed
Like lions loose in the lair,
And scarce could trust to their very eyes,—
For behold ! no King was there.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

Then one of them seized the Queen, and cried,—
“ Now tell us, where is thy lord?”
And he held the sharp point over her heart :
She drooped not her eyes nor did she start,
But she answered never a word.

Then the sword half pierced the true true breast :
But it was the Græme's own son
Cried, “ This is a woman, — we seek a man !”
And away from her girdle-zone
He struck the point of the murderous steel ;
And that foul deed was not done.

And forth flowed all the throng like a sea,
And 'twas empty space once more ;
And my eyes sought out the wounded Queen
As I lay behind the door.

And I said : “ Dear Lady, leave me here,
For I cannot help you now ;
But fly while you may, and none shall reck
Of my place here lying low.”

And she said, “ My Catherine, God help thee !”
Then she looked to the distant floor,
And clasping her hands, “ O God help *him*,”
She sobbed, “ for we can no more !”

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

But God He knows what help may mean,
If it mean to live or to die ;
And what sore sorrow and mighty moan
On earth it may cost ere yet a throne
Be filled in His house on high.

And now the ladies fled with the Queen ;
And thorough the open door
The night-wind wailed round the empty room
And the rushes shook on the floor.

And the bed drooped low in the dark recess
Whence the arras was rent away ;
And the firelight still shone over the space
Where our hidden secret lay.

And the rain had ceased, and the moonbeams lit
The window high in the wall, —
Bright beams that on the plank that I knew
Through the painted pane did fall
And gleamed with the splendour of Scotland's crown
And shield armorial.

But then a great wind swept up the skies,
And the climbing moon fell back ;
And the royal blazon fled from the floor,
And nought remained on its track ;
And high in the darkened window-pane
The shield and the crown were black.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

And what I say next I partly saw
And partly I heard in sooth,
And partly since from the murderers' lips
The torture wrung the truth.

For now again came the armèd tread,
And fast through the hall it fell;
But the throng was less; and ere I saw,
By the voice without I could tell
That Robert Stuart had come with them
Who knew that chamber well.

And over the space the Græme strode dark
With his mantle round him flung;
And in his eye was a flaming light
But not a word on his tongue.

And Stuart held a torch to the floor,
And he found the thing he sought;
And they slashed the plank away with their swords;
And O God! I fainted not!

And the traitor held his torch in the gap,
All smoking and smouldering;
And through the vapour and fire, beneath
In the dark crypt's narrow ring,
With a shout that pealed to the room's high roof
They saw their naked King.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

Half naked he stood, but stood as one
Who yet could do and dare :
With the crown, the King was stript away, —
The Knight was reft of his battle-array, —
But still the Man was there.

From the rout then stepped a villain forth, —
Sir John Hall was his name ;
With a knife unsheathed he leapt to the vault
Beneath the torchlight-flame.

Of his person and stature was the King
A man right manly strong,
And mightily by the shoulder-blades
His foe to his feet he flung.

Then the traitor's brother, Sir Thomas Hall,
Sprang down to work his worst ;
And the King caught the second man by the neck
And flung him above the first.

And he smote and trampled them under him ;
And a long month thence they bare
All black their throats with the grip of his hands
When the hangman's hand came there.

And sore he strove to have had their knives,
But the sharp blades gashed his hands.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

Oh James! so armed, thou hadst battled there
Till help had come of thy bands;
And oh! once more thou hadst held our throne
And ruled thy Scottish lands!

But while the King o'er his foes still raged
With a heart that nought could tame,
Another man sprang down to the crypt;
And with his sword in his hand hard-gripp'd,
There stood Sir Robert Græme.

(Now shame on the recreant traitor's heart
Who durst not face his King
Till the body unarmed was wearied out
With two-fold combating!

Ah! well might the people sing and say,
As oft ye have heard aright:—
“*O Robert Græme, O Robert Græme,
Who slew our King, God give thee shame!*”
For he slew him not as a knight.)

And the naked King turned round at bay,
But his strength had passed the goal,
And he could but gasp:—“*Mine hour is come;
But oh! to succour thine own soul's doom,
Let a priest now shrive my soul!*”

And the traitor looked on the King's spent strength,
And said:—“*Have I kept my word?—*

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

Yea, King, the mortal pledge that I gave?
No black friar's shrift thy soul shall have,
But the shrift of this red sword!"

With that he smote his King through the breast;
And all they three in that pen
Fell on him and stabbed and stabbed him there
Like merciless murderous men.

Yet seemed it now that Sir Robert Græme,
Ere the King's last breath was o'er,
Turned sick at heart with the deadly sight
And would have done no more.

But a cry came from the troop above:—
"If him thou do not slay,
The price of his life that thou dost spare
Thy forfeit life shall pay!"

O God! what more did I hear or see,
Or how should I tell the rest?
But there at length our King lay slain
With sixteen wounds in his breast.

O God! and now did a bell boom forth,
And the murderers turned and fled;—
Too late, too late, O God, did it sound!—
And I heard the true men mustering round,
And the cries and the coming tread.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

But ere they came, to the black death-gap
Somewise did I creep and steal ;
And lo ! or ever I swooned away,
Through the dusk I saw where the white face lay
In the Pit of Fortune's Wheel.

And now, ye Scottish maids who have heard
Dread things of the days grown old,—
Even at the last, of true Queen Jane
May somewhat yet be told,
And how she dealt for her dear lord's sake
Dire vengeance manifold.

'Twas in the Charterhouse of Perth,
In the fair-lit Death-chapelle,
That the slain King's corpse on bier was laid
With chaunt and requiem-knell.

And all with royal wealth of balm
Was the body purified ;
And none could trace on the brow and lips
The death that he had died.

In his robes of state he lay asleep
With orb and sceptre in hand ;
And by the crown he wore on his throne
Was his kingly forehead spann'd.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

And, girls, 'twas a sweet sad thing to see
How the curling golden hair,
As in the day of the poet's youth,
From the King's crown clustered there.

And if all had come to pass in the brain
That throbbed beneath those curls,
Then Scots had said in the days to come
That this their soil was a different home
And a different Scotland, girls !

And the Queen sat by him night and day,
And oft she knelt in prayer,
All wan and pale in the widow's veil
That shrouded her shining hair.

And I had got good help of my hurt :
And only to me some sign
She made ; and save the priests that were there,
No face would she see but mine.

And the month of March wore on apace ;
And now fresh couriers fared
Still from the country of the Wild Scots
With news of the traitors snared.

And still as I told her day by day,
Her pallor changed to sight,

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

And the frost grew to a furnace-flame
That burnt her visage white.

And evermore as I brought her word,
She bent to her dead King James,
And in the cold ear with fire-drawn breath
She spoke the traitors' names.

But when the name of Sir Robert Græme
Was the one she had to give,
I ran to hold her up from the floor ;
For the froth was on her lips, and sore
I feared that she could not live.

And the month of March wore nigh to its end,
And still was the death-pall spread ;
For she would not bury her slaughtered lord
Till his slayers all were dead.

And now of their dooms dread tidings came,
And of torments fierce and dire ;
And nought she spake, — she had ceased to speak, —
But her eyes were a soul on fire.

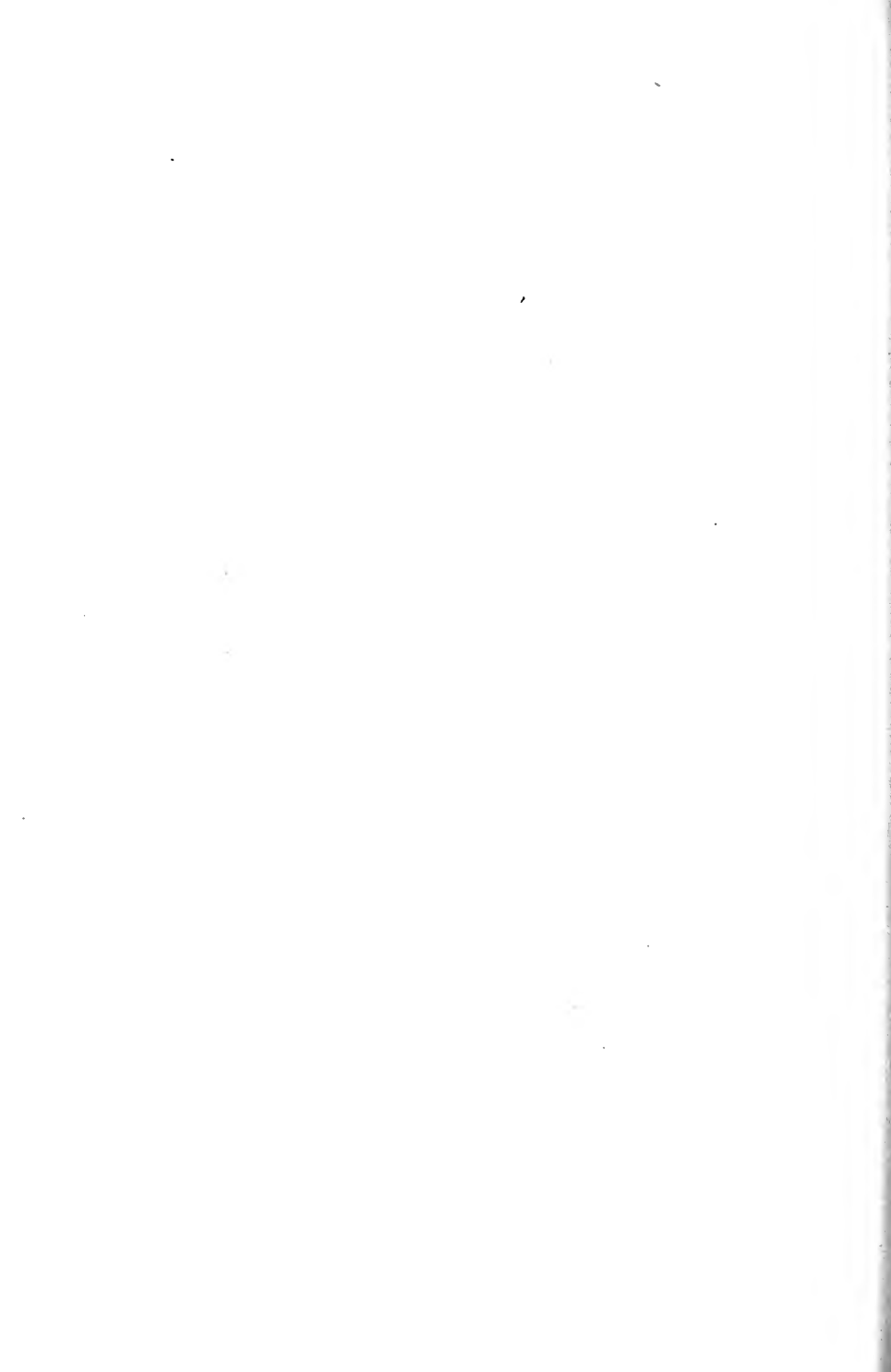
But when I told her the bitter end
Of the stern and just award,
She leaned o'er the bier, and thrice three times
She kissed the lips of her lord.

THE KING'S TRAGEDY

And then she said, — “ My King, they are dead ! ”
And she knelt on the chapel-floor,
And whispered low with a strange proud smile, —
“ James, James, they suffered more ! ”

Last she stood up to her queenly height,
But she shook like an autumn leaf,
As though the fire wherein she burned
Then left her body, and all were turned
To winter of life-long grief.

And “ O James ! ” she said, — “ My James ! ” she said, —
“ Alas for the woful thing,
That a poet true and a friend of man,
In desperate days of bale and ban,
Should needs be born a King ! ”



THE HOUSE OF LIFE:
A SONNET-SEQUENCE

[The present full series of *The House of Life* consists of sonnets only. It will be evident that many among those now first added are still the work of earlier years.]

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ANIMA



A Sonnet is a moments monument, —

Memorial from the soul's eternity
To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
Of its own intricate futility's reverent;
Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
As Day or Night prevail; and let Time see
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.

A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals,

The soul, — its converse, to what Power 'tis due: —
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
Of Life, or dower in Loves high retinue,
It serve; or, 'mid the dark wharfs cavernous breath,
In Charon's palm it pay the toll to Death.

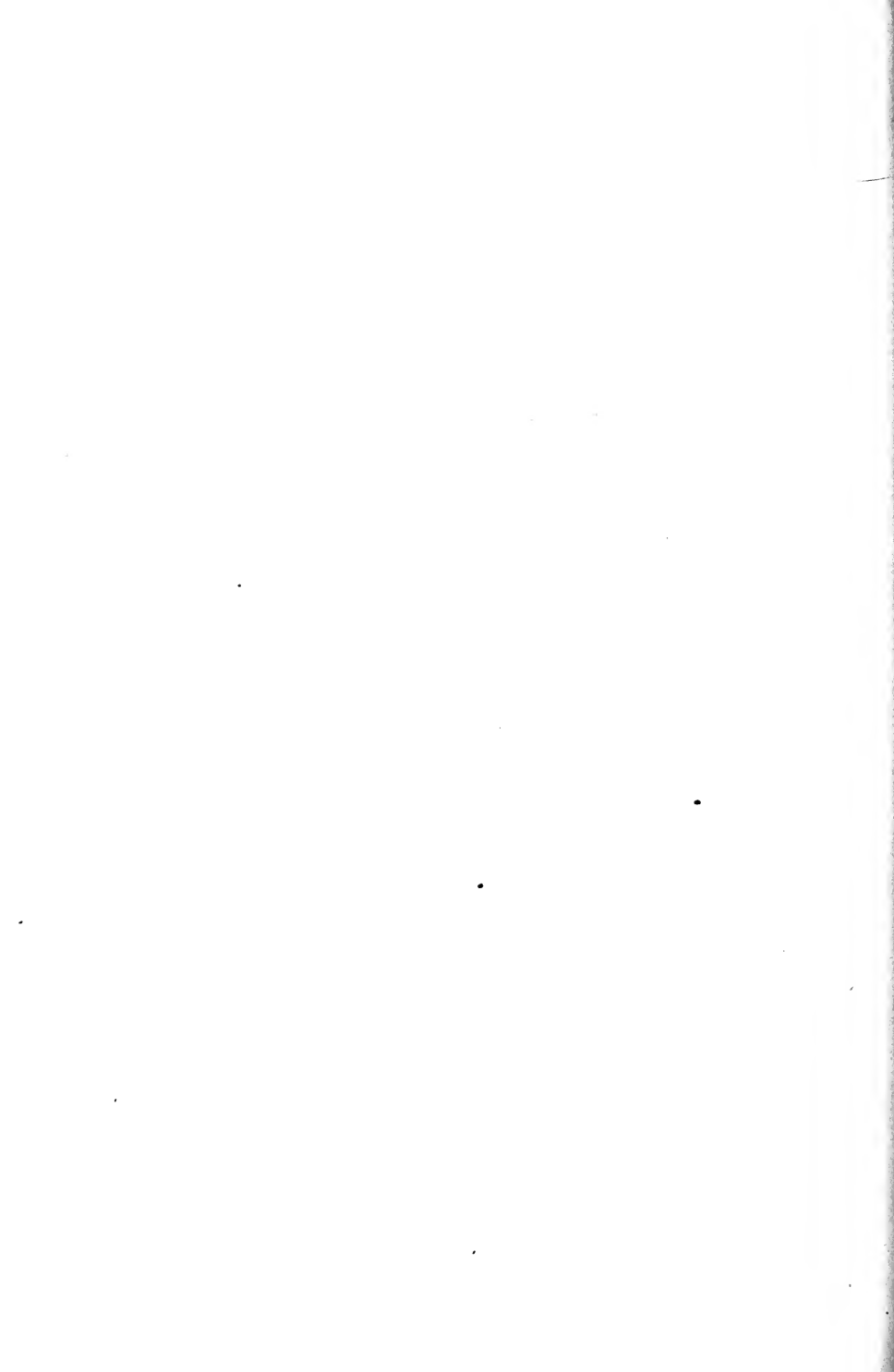
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*A Sonnet is a moment's monument,—
Memorial from the Soul's eternity
To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
Of its own arduous fulness reverent:
Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.*

*A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
The soul,—its converse, to what Power 'tis due:—
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,
It serve; or, 'mid the dark wharf's cavernous breath,
In Charon's palm it pay the toll to Death.*



PART I
YOUTH AND CHANGE



SONNET I

LOVE ENTHRONED

MARKED all kindred Powers the heart finds fair :—
| Truth, with awed lips ; and Hope, with eyes upcast ;
And Fame, whose loud wings fan the ashen Past
To signal-fires, Oblivion's flight to scare ;
And Youth, with still some single golden hair
Unto his shoulder clinging, since the last
Embrace wherein two sweet arms held him fast ;
And Life, still wreathing flowers for Death to wear.

Love's throne was not with these ; but far above
All passionate wind of welcome and farewell
He sat in breathless bowers they dream not of ;
Though Truth foreknow Love's heart, and Hope foretell,
And Fame be for Love's sake desirable,
And Youth be dear, and Life be sweet to Love.

SONNET II

BRIDAL BIRTH

AS when desire, long darkling, dawns, and first
The mother looks upon the newborn child,
Even so my Lady stood at gaze and smiled
When her soul knew at length the Love it nurs'd.
Born with her life, creature of poignant thirst
And exquisite hunger, at her heart Love lay
Quickening in darkness, till a voice that day
Cried on him, and the bonds of birth were burst.

Now, shielded in his wings, our faces yearn
Together, as his fullgrown feet now range
The grove, and his warm hands our couch prepare :
Till to his song our bodiless souls in turn
Be born his children, when Death's nuptial change
Leaves us for light the halo of his hair.

SONNET III

LOVE'S REDEMPTION

O THOU who at Love's hour ecstatically
Unto my lips dost evermore present,
The body and blood of Love in sacrament;
Whom I have neared and felt thy breath to be
The inmost incense of his sanctuary;
Who without speech hast owned him, and, intent
Upon his will, thy life with mine hast blent,
And murmured, o'er the cup, Remember me!—

O what from thee the grace, for me the prize,
And what to Love the glory, — when the whole
Of the deep stair thou tread'st to the dim shoal
And weary water of the place of sighs,
And there dost work deliverance, as thine eyes
Draw up my prisoned spirit to thy soul!

SONNET IV

LOVESIGHT

WHEN do I see thee most, beloved one?
When in the light the spirits of mine eyes
Before thy face, their altar, solemnize
The worship of that Love through thee made known?
Or when in the dusk hours, (we two alone,)
Close-kissed and eloquent of still replies
Thy twilight-hidden glimmering visage lies,
And my soul only sees thy soul its own?

O love, my love! if I no more should see
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring, —
How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

SONNET V

HEART'S HOPE

BY what word's power, the key of paths untrod,
Shall I the difficult deeps of Love explore,
Till parted waves of Song yield up the shore
Even as that sea which Israel crossed dryshod?
For lo! in some poor rhythmic period,
Lady, I fain would tell how evermore
Thy soul I know not from thy body, nor
Thee from myself, neither our love from God.

Yea, in God's name, and Love's, and thine, would I
Draw from one loving heart such evidence
As to all hearts all things shall signify;
Tender as dawn's first hill-fire, and intense
As instantaneous penetrating sense,
In Spring's birth-hour, of other Springs gone by.

SONNET VI

THE KISS

WHAT smouldering senses in death's sick delay
Or seizure of malign vicissitude
Can rob this body of honour, or denude
This soul of wedding-raiment worn to-day?
For lo! even now my lady's lips did play
With these my lips such consonant interlude
As laurelled Orpheus longed for when he wooed
The half-drawn hungering face with that last lay.

I was a child beneath her touch, — a man
When breast to breast we clung, even I and she, —
A spirit when her spirit looked through me, —
A god when all our life-breath met to fan
Our life-blood, till love's emulous ardours ran,
Fire within fire, desire in deity.

SONNET VII

NUPTIAL SLEEP

AT length their long kiss severed, with sweet smart :
And as the last slow sudden drops are shed
From sparkling eyes when all the storm has fled,
So, singly, flagged the pulses of each heart.
Their bosoms sundered, with the opening start
Of married flowers to either side outspread
From the knit stem ; yet still their mouths, burnt red,
Fawned on each other where they lay apart.
Sleep sank them lower than the tide of dreams,
And their dreams watched them sink, and slid away ;
Slowly their souls swam up again, through gleams
Of watered light and dull drowned waifs of day ;
Till from some wonder of new woods and streams
He woke, and wondered more ; for there she lay.

SONNET VIII

SUPREME SURRENDER

TO all the spirits of Love that wander by
Along the love-sown fallow field of sleep
My lady lies apparent; and the deep
Calls to the deep; and no man sees but I.
The bliss so long afar, at length so nigh,
Rests there attained. Methinks proud Love must weep
When Fate's control doth from his harvest reap
The sacred hour for which the years did sigh.

First touched, the hand now warm around my neck
Taught memory long to mock desire: and lo!
Across my breast the abandoned hair doth flow,
Where one shorn tress long stirred the longing ache:
And next the heart that trembled for its sake
Lies the queen-heart in sovereign overthrow.

SONNET IX

LOVE'S LOVERS

SOME ladies love the jewels in Love's zone
And gold-tipped darts he hath for painless play
In idle scornful hours he flings away ;
And some that listen to his lute's soft tone
Do love to deem the silver praise their own ;
Some prize his blindfold sight ; and there be they
Who kissed his wings which brought him yesterday
And thank his wings to-day that he is flown.

My lady only loves the heart of Love :
Therefore Love's heart, my lady, hath for thee
His bower of unimagined flower and tree :
There kneels he now, and all-anhungered of
Thine eyes grey-lit in shadowing hair above,
Seals with thy mouth his immortality.

SONNET X

PASSION AND WORSHIP

ONE flame-winged brought a white-winged harp-player
Even where my lady and I lay all alone ;
Saying : " Behold, this minstrel is unknown ;
Bid him depart, for I am minstrel here :
Only my strains are to Love's dear ones dear."
Then said I : " Through thine hautboy's rapturous tone
Unto my lady still this harp makes moan,
And still she deems the cadence deep and clear."

Then said my lady : " Thou art Passion of Love,
And this Love's Worship : both he plights to me.
Thy mastering music walks the sunlit sea :
But where wan water trembles in the grove
And the wan moon is all the light thereof,
This harp still makes my name its voluntary."

SONNET XI

THE PORTRAIT

O LORD of all compassionate control,
O Love! let this my lady's picture glow
Under my hand to praise her name, and show
Even of her inner self the perfect whole:
That he who seeks her beauty's furthest goal,
Beyond the light that the sweet glances throw
And refluent wave of the sweet smile, may know
The very sky and sea-line of her soul.

Lo! it is done. Above the long lithe throat
The mouth's mould testifies of voice and kiss,
The shadowed eyes remember and foresee.
Her face is made her shrine. Let all men note
That in all years (O Love, thy gift is this!)
They that would look on her must come to me.

SONNET XII

THE LOVE-LETTER

WARMED by her hand and shadowed by her hair
As close she leaned and poured her heart through thee,
Whereof the articulate throbs accompany
The smooth black stream that makes thy whiteness fair, —
Sweet fluttering sheet, even of her breath aware, —
Oh let thy silent song disclose to me
That soul wherewith her lips and eyes agree
Like married music in Love's answering air.

Fain had I watched her when, at some fond thought,
Her bosom to the writing closelier press'd,
And her breast's secrets peered into her breast;
When, through eyes raised an instant, her soul sought
My soul, and from the sudden confluence caught
The words that made her love the loveliest.

SONNET XIII

THE LOVERS' WALK

SWEET twining hedgeflowers wind-stirred in no wise
On this June day; and hand that clings in hand:—
Still glades; and meeting faces scarcely fann'd:—
An osier-odoured stream that draws the skies
Deep to its heart; and mirrored eyes in eyes:—
Fresh hourly wonder o'er the Summer land
Of light and cloud; and two souls softly spann'd
With one o'erarching heaven of smiles and sighs:—

Even such their path, whose bodies lean unto
Each other's visible sweetness amorously, —
Whose passionate hearts lean by Love's high decree
Together on his heart for ever true,
As the cloud-foaming firmamental blue
Rest on the blue line of a foamless sea.

SONNET XIV

YOUTH'S ANTIPHONY

“ I LOVE you, sweet: how can you ever learn
How much I love you?” “ You I love even so,
And so I learn it.” “ Sweet, you cannot know
How fair you are.” “ If fair enough to earn
Your love, so much is all my love's concern.”
“ My love grows hourly, sweet.” “ Mine too doth grow,
Yet love seemed full so many hours ago !”
Thus lovers speak, till kisses claim their turn.

Ah ! happy they to whom such words as these
In youth have served for speech the whole day long,
Hour after hour, remote from the world's throng,
Work, contest, fame, all life's confederate pleas,—
What while Love breathed in sighs and silences
Through two blent souls one rapturous undersong.

SONNET XV

YOUTH'S SPRING-TRIBUTE

ON this sweet bank your head thrice sweet and dear
I lay, and spread your hair on either side,
And see the newborn woodflowers bashful-eyed
Look through the golden tresses here and there.
On these debateable borders of the year
Spring's foot half falters; scarce she yet may know
The leafless blackthorn-blossom from the snow;
And through her bowers the wind's way still is clear.

But April's sun strikes down the glades to-day;
So shut your eyes upturned, and feel my kiss
Creep, as the Spring now thrills through every spray,
Up your warm throat to your warm lips: for this
Is even the hour of Love's sworn suitservice,
With whom cold hearts are counted castaway.

SONNET XVI

THE BIRTH-BOND

HAVE you not noted, in some family
Where two were born of a first marriage-bed,
How still they own their gracious bond, though fed
And nursed on the forgotten breast and knee? —
How to their father's children they shall be
In act and thought of one goodwill; but each
Shall for the other have, in silence speech,
And in a word complete community?

Even so, when first I saw you, seemed it, love,
That among souls allied to mine was yet
One nearer kindred than life hinted of.
O born with me somewhere that men forget,
And though in years of sight and sound unmet,
Known for my soul's birth-partner well enough!

SONNET XVII

A DAY OF LOVE

THOSE envied places which do know her well,
And are so scornful of this lonely place,
Even now for once are emptied of her grace :
Nowhere but here she is : and while Love's spell
From his predominant presence doth compel
All alien hours, an outworn populace,
The hours of Love fill full the echoing space
With sweet confederate music favourable.

Now many memories make solicitous
The delicate love-lines of her mouth, till, lit
With quivering fire, the words take wing from it ;
As here between our kisses we sit thus
Speaking of things remembered, and so sit
Speechless while things forgotten call to us.

SONNET XVIII

BEAUTY'S PAGEANT

WHAT dawn-pulse at the heart of heaven, or last
 Incarnate flower of culminating day, —
 What marshalled marvels on the skirts of May,
Or song full-quired, sweet June's encomiast;
What glory of change by nature's hand amass'd
 Can vie with all those moods of varying grace
 Which o'er one loveliest woman's form and face
Within this hour, within this room, have pass'd?

Love's very vesture and elect disguise
 Was each fine movement, — wonder new-begot
 Of lily or swan or swan-stemmed galiot;
Joy to his sight who now the sadlier sighs,
Parted again; and sorrow yet for eyes
 Unborn, that read these words and saw her not.

SONNET XIX.

GENIUS IN BEAUTY

BEAUTY like hers is genius. Not the call
Of Homer's or of Dante's heart sublime, —
Not Michael's hand furrowing the zones of time, —
Is more with compassed mysteries musical ;
Nay, not in Spring's or Summer's sweet footfall
More gathered gifts exuberant Life bequeathes
Than doth this sovereign face, whose love-spell breathes
Even from its shadowed contour on the wall.

As many men are poets in their youth,
But for one sweet-strung soul the wires prolong
Even through all change the indomitable song ;
So in likewise the envenomed years, whose tooth
Rends shallower grace with ruin void of ruth,
Upon this beauty's power shall wreak no wrong.

SONNET XX

SILENT NOON

YOUR hands lie open in the long fresh grass, —
The finger-points look through like rosy blooms :
Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and glooms
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
Are golden kingcup-fields with silver edge
Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn-hedge.
'Tis visible silence, still as the hour-glass.

Deep in the sun-searched growths the dragon-fly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky : —
So this wing'd hour is dropt to us from above.
Oh ! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,
This close-companioned inarticulate hour
When twofold silence was the song of love.

SONNET XXI

GRACIOUS MOONLIGHT

Even as the moon grows queenlier in mid-space
When the sky darkens, and her cloud-rapt car
Thrills with intenser radiance from afar, —
So lambent, lady, beams thy sovereign grace
When the drear soul desires thee. Of that face
What shall be said, — which, like a governing star,
Gathers and garners from all things that are
Their silent penetrative loveliness?

O'er water-daisies and wild waifs of Spring,
There where the iris rears its gold-crowned sheaf
With flowering rush and sceptred arrow-leaf,
So have I marked Queen Dian, in bright ring
Of cloud above and wave below, take wing
And chase night's gloom, as thou the spirit's grief.

SONNET XXII

LOVE-SWEETNESS

SWEET dimness of her loosened hair's downfall
About thy face; her sweet hands round thy head
In gracious fostering union garlanded;
Her tremulous smiles; her glances' sweet recall
Of love; her murmuring sighs memorial;
Her mouth's culled sweetness by thy kisses shed
On cheeks and neck and eyelids, and so led
Back to her mouth which answers there for all:—

What sweeter than these things, except the thing
In lacking which all these would lose their sweet:—
The confident heart's still fervour: the swift beat
And soft subsidence of the spirit's wing,
Then when it feels, in cloud-girt wayfaring,
The breath of kindred plumes against its feet?

SONNET XXIII

HEART'S HAVEN

SOMETIMES she is a child within mine arms,
 Cowering beneath dark wings that love must chase, —
 With still tears showering and averted face,
Inexplicably filled with faint alarms :
And oft from mine own spirit's hurtling harms
 I crave the refuge of her deep embrace, —
 Against all ills the fortified strong place
And sweet reserve of sovereign counter-charms.

And Love, our light at night and shade at noon,
 Lulls us to rest with songs, and turns away
 All shafts of shelterless tumultuous day.
Like the moon's growth, his face gleams through his tune ;
And as soft waters warble to the moon,
 Our answering spirits chime one roundelay.

SONNET XXIV

LOVE'S BAUBLES

I STOOD where Love in brimming armfuls bore
Slight wanton flowers and foolish toys of fruit:
And round him ladies thronged in warm pursuit,
Fingered and lipped and proffered the strange store.
And from one hand the petal and the core
Savoured of sleep; and cluster and curled shoot
Seemed from another hand like shame's salute,—
Gifts that I felt my cheek was blushing for.

At last Love bade my Lady give the same:
And as I looked, the dew was light thereon;
And as I took them, at her touch they shone
With inmost heaven-hue of the heart of flame.
And then Love said: "Lo! when the hand is hers,
Follies of love are love's true ministers."

SONNET XXV

PRIDE OF YOUTH

EVEN as a child, of sorrow that we give
The dead, but little in his heart can find,
Since without need of thought to his clear mind
Their turn it is to die and his to live :—
Even so the winged New Love smiles to receive
Along his eddyng plumes the auroral wind,
Nor, forward glorying, casts one look behind
Where night-rack shrouds the Old Love fugitive.

There is a change in every hour's recall,
And the last cowslip in the fields we see
On the same day with the first corn-poppy.
Alas for hourly change ! Alas for all
The loves that from his hand proud Youth lets fall,
Even as the beads of a told rosary !

SONNET XXVI

WINGED HOURS

EACH hour until we meet is as a bird
That wings from far his gradual way along
The rustling covert of my soul, — his song
Still loudlier trilled through leaves more deeply stirr'd :
But at the hour of meeting, a clear word
Is every note he sings, in Love's own tongue ;
Yet, Love, thou know'st the sweet strain suffers wrong,
Through our contending kisses oft unheard.

What of that hour at last, when for her sake
No wing may fly to me nor song may flow ;
When, wandering round my life unleaved, I know
The bloodied feathers scattered in the brake,
And think how she, far from me, with like eyes
Sees through the untuneful bough the wingless skies ?

SONNET XXVII

MID-RAPTURE

THOU lovely and beloved, thou my love ;
Whose kiss seems still the first ; whose summoning eyes,
Even now, as for our love-world's new sunrise,
Shed very dawn ; whose voice, attuned above
All modulation of the deep-bowered dove,
Is like a hand laid softly on the soul ;
Whose hand is like a sweet voice to control
Those worn tired brows it hath the keeping of : —
What word can answer to thy word, — what gaze
To thine, which now absorbs within its sphere
My worshipping face, till I am mirrored there
Light-circled in a heaven of deep-drawn rays ?
What clasp, what kiss mine inmost heart can prove,
O lovely and beloved, O my love ?

SONNET XXVIII

HEART'S COMPASS

SOMETIMES thou seem'st not as thyself alone,
But as the meaning of all things that are ;
A breathless wonder, shadowing forth afar
Some heavenly solstice hushed and halcyon ;
Whose unstirred lips are music's visible tone ;
Whose eyes the sun-gate of the soul unbar,
Being of its furthest fires oracular ;—
The evident heart of all life sown and mown.

Even such Love is ; and is not thy name Love ?
Yea, by thy hand the Love-god rends apart
All gathering clouds of Night's ambiguous art ;
Flings them far down, and sets thine eyes above ;
And simply, as some gage of flower or glove,
Stakes with a smile the world against thy heart.

SONNET XXIX

SOUL-LIGHT

WHAT other woman could be loved like you,
Or how of you should love possess his fill?
After the fulness of all rapture, still, —
As at the end of some deep avenue
A tender glamour of day, — there comes to view
Far in your eyes a yet more hungering thrill, —
Such fire as Love's soul-winnowing hands distil
Even from his inmost ark of light and dew.

And as the traveller triumphs with the sun,
Glorying in heat's mid-height, yet startide brings
Wonder new-born, and still fresh transport springs
From limpid lambent hours of day begun ; —
Even so, through eyes and voice, your soul doth move
My soul with changeful light of infinite love.

SONNET XXX

THE MOONSTAR

LADY, I thank thee for thy loveliness,
Because my lady is more lovely still.
Glorying I gaze, and yield with glad goodwill
To thee thy tribute; by whose sweet-spun dress
Of delicate life Love labours to assess
My lady's absolute queendom; saying, "Lo!
How high this beauty is, which yet doth show
But as that beauty's sovereign votaress."

Lady, I saw thee with her, side by side;
And as, when night's fair fires their queen surround,
An emulous star too near the moon will ride,—
Even so thy rays within her luminous bound
Were traced no more; and by the light so drown'd,
Lady, not thou but she was glorified.

SONNET XXXI

LAST FIRE

L OVE, through your spirit and mine what summer eve
Now glows with glory of all things possess'd,
Since this day's sun of rapture filled the west
And the light sweetened as the fire took leave?
Awhile now softer let your bosom heave,
As in Love's harbour, even that loving breast,
All care takes refuge while we sink to rest,
And mutual dreams the bygone bliss retrieve.

Many the days that Winter keeps in store,
Sunless throughout, or whose brief sun-glimpses
Scarce shed the heaped snow through the naked trees.
This day at least was Summer's paramour,
Sun-coloured to the imperishable core
With sweet well-being of love and full heart's ease.

SONNET XXXII

HER GIFTS

HIGH grace, the dower of queens ; and therewithal
Some wood-born wonder's sweet simplicity ;
A glance like water brimming with the sky
Or hyacinth-light where forest-shadows fall ;
Such thrilling pallor of cheek as doth enthrall
The heart ; a mouth whose passionate forms imply
All music and all silence held thereby ;
Deep golden locks, her sovereign coronal ;
A round reared neck, meet column of Love's shrine
To cling to when the heart takes sanctuary ;
Hands which for ever at Love's bidding be,
And soft-stirred feet still answering to his sign :—
These are her gifts, as tongue may tell them o'er.
Breathe low her name, my soul ; for that means more.

SONNET XXXIII

EQUAL TROTH

NOT by one measure mayst thou mete our love ;
For how should I be loved as I love thee? —
I, graceless, joyless, lacking absolutely
All gifts that with thy queenship best behave ; —
Thou, throned in every heart's elect alcove,
And crowned with garlands culled from every tree,
Which for no head but thine, by Love's decree,
All beauties and all mysteries interwove.

But here thine eyes and lips yield soft rebuke : —
“Then only,” (say'st thou) “could I love thee less,
When thou couldst doubt my love's equality.”
Peace, sweet ! If not to sum but worth we look, —
Thy heart's transcendence, not my heart's excess, —
Then more a thousandfold thou lov'st than I.

SONNET XXXIV

VENUS VICTRIX

COULD Juno's self more sovereign presence wear
Than thou, 'mid other ladies throned in grace?—
Or Pallas, when thou bend'st with soul-stilled face
O'er poet's page gold-shadowed in thy hair?
Dost thou than Venus seem less heavenly fair
When o'er the sea of love's tumultuous trance
Hovers thy smile, and mingles with thy glance
That sweet voice like the last wave murmuring there?

Before such triune loveliness divine
Awestruck I ask, which goddess here most claims
The prize that, howsoe'er adjudged, is thine?
Then Love breathes low the sweetest of thy names;
And Venus Victrix to my heart doth bring
Herself, the Helen of her guerdoning.

SONNET XXXV

THE DARK GLASS

NOT I myself know all my love for thee :
How should I reach so far, who cannot weigh
To-morrow's dower by gage of yesterday?
Shall birth and death, and all dark names that be
As doors and windows bared to some loud sea,
Lash deaf mine ears and blind my face with spray ;
And shall my sense pierce love, — the last relay
And ultimate outpost of eternity?

Lo ! what am I to Love, the lord of all?
One murmuring shell he gathers from the sand, —
One little heart-flame sheltered in his hand.
Yet through thine eyes he grants me clearest call
And veriest touch of powers primordial
That any hour-girt life may understand.

SONNET XXXVI

THE LAMP'S SHRINE

SOMETIMES I fain would find in thee some fault,
That I might love thee still in spite of it:
Yet how should our Lord Love curtail one whit
Thy perfect praise whom most he would exalt?
Alas! he can but make my heart's low vault
Even in men's sight unworthier, being lit
By thee, who thereby show'st more exquisite
Like fiery chrysoprase in deep basalt.

Yet will I nowise shrink ; but at Love's shrine
Myself within the beams his brow doth dart
Will set the flashing jewel of thy heart
In that dull chamber where it deigns to shine :
For lo! in honour of thine excellencies
My heart takes pride to show how poor it is.

SONNET XXXVII

LIFE-IN-LOVE

NOT in thy body is thy life at all
But in this lady's lips and hands and eyes ;
Through these she yields thee life that vivifies
What else were sorrow's servant and death's thrall.
Look on thyself without her, and recall
The waste remembrance and forlorn surmise
That lived but in a dead-drawn breath of sighs
O'er vanished hours and hours eventual.

Even so much life hath the poor tress of hair
Which, stored apart, is all love hath to show
For heart-beats and for fire-heats long ago ;
Even so much life endures unknown, even where,
'Mid change the changeless night environeth,
Lies all that golden hair undimmed in death.

SONNET XXXVIII

THE LOVE-MOON

“WHEN that dead face, bowered in the furthest years,
Which once was all the life years held for thee,
Can now scarce bid the tides of memory
Cast on thy soul a little spray of tears, —
How canst thou gaze into these eyes of hers
Whom now thy heart delights in, and not see
Within each orb Love’s philtred euphrasy
Make them of buried troth remembrancers?”

“Nay, pitiful Love, nay, loving Pity! Well
Thou knowest that in these twain I have confess’d
Two very voices of thy summoning bell.
Nay, Master, shall not Death make manifest
In these the culminant changes which approve
The love-moon that must light my soul to Love?”

SONNET XXXIX

THE MORROW'S MESSAGE

“**T**HOU Ghost,” I said, “and is thy name To-day?—
Yester-day’s son, with such an abject brow!—
And can To-morrow be more pale than thou?”
While yet I spoke, the silence answered: “Yea,
Henceforth our issue is all grieved and grey,
And each beforehand makes such poor avow
As of old leaves beneath the budding bough
Or night-drift that the sundawn shreds away.”

Then cried I: “Mother of many malisons,
O Earth, receive me to thy dusty bed!”
But therewithal the tremulous silence said:
“Lo! Love yet bids thy lady greet thee once:—
Yea, twice, — whereby thy life is still the sun’s;
And thrice, — whereby the shadow of death is dead.”

SONNET XL

SLEEPLESS DREAMS

G IRT in dark growths, yet glimmering with one star,
O night desirous as the nights of youth !
Why should my heart within thy spell, forsooth,
Now beat, as the bride's finger-pulses are
Quickened within the girdling golden bar?
What wings are these that fan my pillow smooth?
And why does Sleep, waved back by Joy and Ruth,
Tread softly round and gaze at me from far?

Nay, night deep-leaved ! And would Love feign in thee
Some shadowy palpitating grove that bears
Rest for man's eyes and music for his ears?
O lonely night ! art thou not known to me,
A thicket hung with masks of mockery
And watered with the wasteful warmth of tears?

SONNET XLI

SEVERED SELVES

TWO separate divided silences,
Which, brought together, would find loving voice ;
Two glances which together would rejoice
In love, now lost like stars beyond dark trees ;
Two hands apart whose touch alone gives ease ;
Two bosoms which, heart-shrined with mutual flame,
Would, meeting in one clasp, be made the same ;
Two souls, the shores wave-mocked of Sundering seas :—

Such are we now. Ah ! may our hope forecast
Indeed one hour again, when on this stream
Of darkened love once more the light shall gleam?—
An hour how slow to come, how quickly past, —
Which blooms and fades, and only leaves at last,
Faint as shed flowers, the attenuated dream.

SONNET XLII

THROUGH DEATH TO LOVE

L IKE labour-laden moonclouds faint to flee
From winds that sweep the winter-bitten wold, —
Like multiform circumfluence manifold
Of night's flood-tide, — like terrors that agree
Of hoarse-tongued fire and inarticulate sea, —
Even such, within some glass dimmed by our breath,
Our hearts discern wild images of Death,
Shadows and shoals that edge eternity.

Howbeit athwart Death's imminent shade doth soar
One Power, than flow of stream or flight of dove
Sweeter to glide around, to brood above.
Tell me, my heart, — what angel-greeted door
Or threshold of wing-winnowed threshing-floor
Hath guest fire-fledged as thine, whose lord is Love?

SONNET XLIII

HOPE OVERTAKEN

I DEEMED thy garments, O my Hope, were grey,
So far I viewed thee. Now the space between
Is passed at length; and garmented in green
Even as in days of yore thou stand'st to-day.
Ah God! and but for lingering dull dismay,
On all that road our footsteps erst had been
Even thus commingled, and our shadows seen
Blent on the hedgerows and the water-way.

O Hope of mine whose eyes are living love,
No eyes but hers, — O Love and Hope the same! —
Lean close to me, for now the sinking sun
That warmed our feet scarce gilds our hair above.
O hers thy voice and very hers thy name!
Alas, cling round me, for the day is done!

SONNET XLIV

LOVE AND HOPE

BLESS love and hope. Full many a withered year
Whirled past us, eddying to its chill doomsday;
And clasped together where the blown leaves lay,
We long have knelt and wept full many a tear.
Yet lo! one hour at last, the Spring's compeer,
Flutes softly to us from some green byeway:
Those years, those tears are dead, but only they:—
Bless love and hope, true soul; for we are here.

Cling heart to heart; nor of this hour demand
Whether in very truth, when we are dead,
Our hearts shall wake to know Love's golden head
Sole sunshine of the imperishable land;
Or but discern, through night's unfeatured scope,
Scorn-fired at length the illusive eyes of Hope.

SONNET XLV

CLOUD AND WIND

LOVE, should I fear death most for you or me?
Yet if you die, can I not follow you,
Forcing the straits of change? Alas! but who
Shall wrest a bond from night's inveteracy,
Ere yet my hazardous soul put forth, to be
Her warrant against all her haste might rue? —
Ah! in your eyes so reached what dumb adieu,
What unsunned gyres of waste eternity?

And if I die the first, shall death be then
A lampless watchtower whence I see you weep? —
Or (woe is me!) a bed wherein my sleep
Ne'er notes (as death's dear cup at last you drain),
The hour when you too learn that all is vain
And that Hope sows what Love shall never reap?

SONNET XLVI

SECRET PARTING

BECAUSE our talk was of the cloud-control
And moon-track of the journeying face of Fate,
Her tremulous kisses faltered at love's gate
And her eyes dreamed against a distant goal:
But soon, remembering her how brief the whole
Of joy, which its own hours annihilate,
Her set gaze gathered, thirstier than of late,
✓ And as she kissed, her mouth became her soul.

Thence in what ways we wandered, and how strove
To build with fire-tried vows the piteous home
Which memory haunts and whither sleep may roam,—
They only know for whom the roof of Love
Is the still-seated secret of the grove,
Nor spire may rise nor bell be heard therefrom.

SONNET XLVII

PARTED LOVE

WHAT shall be said of this embattled day
And armed occupation of this night
By all thy foes beleaguered, — now when sight
Nor sound denotes the loved one far away?
Of these thy vanquished hours what shalt thou say, —
As every sense to which she dealt delight
Now labours lonely o'er the stark noon-height
To reach the sunset's desolate disarray?

Stand still, fond fettered wretch! while Memory's art
Parades the Past before thy face, and lures
Thy spirit to her passionate portraitures:
Till the tempestuous tide-gates flung apart
Flood with wild will the hollows of thy heart,
And thy heart rends thee, and thy body endures.

SONNET XLVIII

BROKEN MUSIC

THE mother will not turn, who thinks she hears
Her nursling's speech first grow articulate ;
But breathless with averted eyes elate
She sits, with open lips and open ears,
That it may call her twice. 'Mid doubts and fears
Thus oft my soul has hearkened ; till the song,
A central moan for days, at length found tongue,
And the sweet music welled and the sweet tears.

But now, whatever while the soul is fain
To list that wonted murmur, as it were
The speech-bound sea-shell's low importunate strain,—
No breath of song, thy voice alone is there,
O bitterly beloved ! and all her gain
Is but the pang of unpermitted prayer.

SONNET XLIX

DEATH-IN-LOVE

THERE came an image in Life's retinue
That had Love's wings and bore his gonfalon :
Fair was the web, and nobly wrought thereon,
O soul-sequestered face, thy form and hue !
Bewildering sounds, such as Spring wakens to,
Shook in its folds ; and through my heart its power
Sped trackless as the immemorable hour
When birth's dark portal groaned and all was new.

But a veiled woman followed, and she caught
The banner round its staff, to furl and cling,—
Then plucked a feather from the bearer's wing,
And held it to his lips that stirred it not,
And said to me, " Behold, there is no breath :
I and this Love are one, and I am Death."

WILLOWWOOD

I

I SAT with Love upon a woodside well,
Leaning across the water, I and he ;
Nor ever did he speak nor looked at me,
But touched his lute wherein was audible
The certain secret thing he had to tell :
Only our mirrored eyes met silently
In the low wave ; and that sound came to be
The passionate voice I knew ; and my tears fell.

And at their fall, his eyes beneath grew hers ;
And with his foot and with his wing-feathers
He swept the spring that watered my heart's drouth.
Then the dark ripples spread to waving hair,
And as I stooped, her own lips rising there
Bubbled with brimming kisses at my mouth.

II

AND now Love sang : but his was such a song,
So meshed with half-remembrance hard to free,
As souls disused in death's sterility
May sing when the new birthday tarries long.
And I was made aware of a dumb throng
That stood aloof, one form by every tree,
All mournful forms, for each was I or she,
The shades of those our days that had no tongue.

They looked on us, and knew us and were known ;
While fast together, alive from the abyss,
Clung the soul-wrung implacable close kiss ;
And pity of self through all made broken moan
Which said, " For once, for once, for once alone !"
And still Love sang, and what he sang was this :—

III

“ O YE, all ye that walk in Willowwood,
That walk with hollow faces burning white ;
What fathom-depth of soul-struck widowhood,
What long, what longer hours, one lifelong night,
Ere ye again, who so in vain have wooed
Your last hope lost, who so in vain invite
Your lips to that their unforgotten food,
Ere ye, ere ye again shall see the light !

Alas ! the bitter banks in Willowwood,
With tear-spurge wan, with blood-wort burning red :
Alas ! if ever such a pillow could
Steep deep the soul in sleep till she were dead, —
Better all life forget her than this thing,
That Willowwood should hold her wandering ! ”

IV

SO sang he : and as meeting rose and rose
Together cling through the wind's wellaway
Nor change at once, yet near the end of day
The leaves drop loosened where the heart-stain glows,—
So when the song died did the kiss uncloze ;
And her face fell back drowned, and was as grey
As its grey eyes ; and if it ever may
Meet mine again I know not if Love knows.

Only I know that I leaned low and drank
A long draught from the water where she sank,
Her breath and all her tears and all her soul :
And as I leaned, I know I felt Love's face
Pressed on my neck with moan of pity and grace,
Till both our heads were in his aureole.

SONNET LIV

WITHOUT HER

WHAT of her glass without her? The blank grey
There where the pool is blind of the moon's face.
Her dress without her? The tossed empty space
Of cloud-rack whence the moon has passed away.
Her paths without her? Day's appointed sway
Usurped by desolate night. Her pillowed place
Without her! Tears, ah me! for love's good grace,
And cold forgetfulness of night or day.

What of the heart without her? Nay, poor heart,
Of thee what word remains ere speech be still?
A wayfarer by barren ways and chill,
Steep ways and weary, without her thou art,
Where the long cloud, the long wood's counterpart,
Sheds doubled darkness up the labouring hill.

SONNET LV

LOVE'S FATALITY

SWEET Love, — but oh! most dread Desire of Love
Life-thwarted. Linked in gyves I saw them stand,
Love shackled with Vain-longing, hand to hand:
And one was eyed as the blue vault above:
But hope tempestuous like a fire-cloud hove
I' the other's gaze, even as in his whose wand
Vainly all night with spell-wrought power has spann'd
The unyielding caves of some deep treasure-trove.

Also his lips, two writhen flakes of flame,
Made moan: "Alas O Love, thus leashed with me!
Wing-footed thou, wing-shouldered, once born free:
And I, thy cowering self, in chains grown tame, —
Bound to thy body and soul, named with thy name, —
Life's iron heart, even Love's Fatality."

SONNET LVI

STILLBORN LOVE

THE hour which might have been yet might not be,
Which man's and woman's heart conceived and bore
Yet whereof life was barren, — on what shore
Bides it the breaking of Time's weary sea?
Bondchild of all consummate joys set free,
It somewhere sighs and serves, and mute before
The house of Love, hears through the echoing door
His hours elect in choral consonancy.

But lo! what wedded souls now hand in hand
Together tread at last the immortal strand
With eyes where burning memory lights love home?
Lo! how the little outcast hour has turned
And leaped to them and in their faces yearned: —
“I am your child: O parents, ye have come!”

TRUE WOMAN

I

HERSELF

TO be a sweetness more desired than Spring ;
A bodily beauty more acceptable
Than the wild rose-tree's arch that crowns the fell ;
To be an essence more environing
Than wine's drained juice ; a music ravishing
More than the passionate pulse of Philomel ; —
To be all this 'neath one soft bosom's swell
That is the flower of life : — how strange a thing !

How strange a thing to be what Man can know
But as a sacred secret ! Heaven's own screen
Hides her soul's purest depth and loveliest glow ;
Closely withheld, as all things most unseen, —
The wave-bowered pearl, — the heart-shaped seal of green
That flecks the snowdrop underneath the snow.

II

HER LOVE

SHE loves him ; for her infinite soul is Love,
And he her lodestar. Passion in her is
A glass facing his fire, where the bright bliss
Is mirrored, and the heat returned. Yet move
That glass, a stranger's amorous flame to prove,
And it shall turn, by instant contraries,
Ice to the moon ; while her pure fire to his
For whom it burns, clings close i' the heart's alcove.

Lo ! they are one. With wifely breast to breast
And circling arms, she welcomes all command
Of love, — her soul to answering ardours fann'd :
Yet as morn springs or twilight sinks to rest,
Ah ! who shall say she deems not loveliest
The hour of sisterly sweet hand-in-hand ?

III

HER HEAVEN

IF to grow old in Heaven is to grow young,
 (As the Seer saw and said,) then blest were he
 With youth for evermore, whose heaven should be
True Woman, she whom these weak notes have sung.
Here and hereafter, — choir-strains of her tongue, —
 Sky-spaces of her eyes, — sweet signs that flee
 About her soul's immediate sanctuary, —
Were Paradise all uttermost worlds among.

The sunrise blooms and withers on the hill
 Like any hillflower; and the noblest troth
 Dies here to dust. Yet shall Heaven's promise clothe
Even yet those lovers who have cherished still
 This test for love: — in every kiss sealed fast
 To feel the first kiss and forbode the last.

SONNET LX

LOVE'S LAST GIFT

LOVE to his singer held a glistening leaf,
And said: "The rose-tree and the apple-tree
Have fruits to vaunt or flowers to lure the bee;
And golden shafts are in the feathered sheaf
Of the great harvest-marshal, the year's chief,
Victorious Summer; aye, and 'neath warm sea
Strange secret grasses lurk inviolably
Between the filtering channels of sunk reef.

All are my blooms; and all sweet blooms of love
To thee I gave while Spring and Summer sang;
But Autumn stops to listen, with some pang
From those worse things the wind is moaning of.
Only this laurel dreads no winter days:
Take my last gift; thy heart hath sung my praise."

PART II
CHANGE AND FATE



SONNET LXI

TRANSFIGURED LIFE

AS growth of form or momentary glance
In a child's features will recall to mind
The father's with the mother's face combin'd, —
Sweet interchange that memories still enhance :
And yet, as childhood's years and youth's advance,
The gradual mouldings leave one stamp behind,
Till in the blended likeness now we find
A separate man's or woman's countenance : —

So in the Song, the singer's Joy and Pain,
Its very parents, evermore expand
To bid the passion's fullgrown birth remain,
By Art's transfiguring essence subtly spann'd ;
And from that song-cloud shaped as a man's hand
There comes the sound as of abundant rain.

SONNET LXII

THE SONG-THROE

BY thine own tears thy song must tears beget,
O Singer! Magic mirror thou hast none
Except thy manifest heart; and save thine own
Anguish or ardour, else no amulet.
Cisterned in Pride, verse is the feathery jet
Of soulless air-flung fountains; nay, more dry
Than the Dead Sea for throats that thirst and sigh,
That song o'er which no singer's lids grew wet.

The Song-god — He the Sun-god — is no slave
Of thine: thy Hunter he, who for thy soul
Fledges his shaft: to no august control
Of thy skilled hand his quivered store he gave:
But if thy lips' loud cry leap to his smart,
The inspir'd recoil shall pierce thy brother's heart.

SONNET LXIII

THE SOUL'S SPHERE

SOME prisoned moon in steep cloud-fastnesses, —
Throned queen and thrall'd ; some dying sun whose pyre
Blazed with momentous memorable fire ; —
Who hath not yearned and fed his heart with these?
Who, sleepless, hath not anguished to appease
Tragical shadow's realm of sound and sight
Conjectured in the lamentable night?
Lo! the soul's sphere of infinite images!

What sense shall count them? Whether it forecast
The rose-winged hours that flutter in the van
Of Love's unquestioning unrevealèd span, —
Visions of golden futures : or that last
Wild pageant of the accumulated past
That clangs and flashes for a drowning man.

SONNET LXIV

INCLUSIVENESS

THE changing guests, each in a different mood,
Sit at the roadside table and arise :
And every life among them in likewise
Is a soul's board set daily with new food.
What man has bent o'er his son's sleep, to brood
How that face shall watch his when cold it lies? —
Or thought, as his own mother kissed his eyes,
Of what her kiss was when his father wooed?

May not this ancient room thou sit'st in dwell
In separate living souls for joy or pain?
Nay, all its corners may be painted plain
Where Heaven shows pictures of some life spent well ;
And may be stamped, a memory all in vain,
Upon the sight of lidless eyes in Hell.



Arden & Memory.

The cuckoo-throat, the heartbeats of the Spring;

The woodcock's flush that leaves it so serene

Like the full-eyed fair unblushing robe;

The swanmen clouds that visit every wing

With fives of sunrise and of sunsetting;

The purple flickering streams to light unborn

And are new-fledged & colorful best of mom

While all the daughters of the day break sing:—

They ride our laws, and memory: and when

All lies, and through dark forest-boughs in town

The wind sweeps onward brandishing the light

Even yet the rose-trees verdure left alone

Will blush all ruddy when the rose is gone

With Pitties and with Mages infinite.

Dante G. Roberts.

London 1879

SONNET LXV

ARDOUR AND MEMORY

THE cuckoo-throb, the heartbeat of the Spring ;
The rosebud's blush that leaves it as it grows
Into the full-eyed fair unblushing rose ;
The summer clouds that visit every wing
With fires of sunrise and of sunseting ;
The furtive flickering streams to light re-born
'Mid airs new-fledged and valorous lusts of morn,
While all the daughters of the daybreak sing : —

These ardour loves, and memory : and when flown
All joys, and through dark forest-boughs in flight
The wind swoops onward brandishing the light,
Even yet the rose-tree's verdure left alone
Will flush all ruddy though the rose be gone ;
With ditties and with dirges infinite.

SONNET LXVI

KNOWN IN VAIN

AS two whose love, first foolish, widening scope,
Knows suddenly, to music high and soft,
The Holy of holies; who because they scoff'd
Are now amazed with shame, nor dare to cope
With the whole truth aloud, lest heaven should ope;
Yet, at their meetings, laugh not as they laugh'd
In speech; nor speak, at length; but sitting oft
Together, within hopeless sight of hope
For hours are silent: — So it happeneth
When Work and Will awake too late, to gaze
After their life sailed by, and hold their breath.
Ah! who shall dare to search through what sad maze
Thenceforth their incommunicable ways
Follow the desultory feet of Death?

SONNET LXVII

THE HEART OF THE NIGHT

FROM child to youth ; from youth to arduous man ;
From lethargy to fever of the heart ;
From faithful life to dream-dowered days apart ;
From trust to doubt ; from doubt to brink of ban ;—
Thus much of change in one swift cycle ran
Till now. Alas, the soul !— how soon must she
Accept her primal immortality, —
The flesh resume its dust whence it began ?

O Lord of work and peace ! O Lord of life !
O Lord, the awful Lord of will ! though late,
Even yet renew this soul with duteous breath :
That when the peace is garnered in from strife,
The work retrieved, the will regenerate,
This soul may see thy face, O Lord of death !

SONNET LXVIII

THE LANDMARK

WAS *that* the landmark? What, — the foolish well
Whose wave, low down, I did not stoop to drink,
But sat and flung the pebbles from its brink
In sport to send its imaged skies pell-mell,
(And mine own image, had I noted well!) —
Was that my point of turning? — I had thought
The stations of my course should rise unsought,
As altar-stone or ensigned citadel.

But lo! the path is missed, I must go back,
And thirst to drink when next I reach the spring
Which once I stained, which since may have grown black.
Yet though no light be left nor bird now sing
As here I turn, I'll thank God, hastening,
That the same goal is still on the same track.

SONNET LXIX

A DARK DAY

THE gloom that breathes upon me with these airs
Is like the drops which strike the traveller's brow
Who knows not, darkling, if they bring him now
Fresh storm, or be old rain the covert bears.
Ah! bodes this hour some harvest of new tares,
Or hath but memory of the day whose plough
Sowed hunger once, — the night at length when thou,
O prayer found vain, didst fall from out my prayers?

How prickly were the growths which yet how smooth,
Along the hedgerows of this journey shed,
Lie by Time's grace till night and sleep may soothe!
Even as the thistledown from pathsides dead
Gleaned by a girl in autumns of her youth,
Which one new year makes soft her marriage-bed.

SONNET LXX

AUTUMN IDLENESS

^a THIS sunlight shames November where he grieves ^a
In dead red leaves, and will not let him shun ^b
The day, though bough with bough be over-run. ^b
But with a blessing every glade receives ^a
High salutation; while from hillock-eaves ^a
The deer gaze calling, dappled white and dun, ^B
As if, being foresters of old, the sun ^B
Had marked them with the shade of forest-leaves. ^a

Here dawn to-day unveiled her magic glass; ^c
Here noon now gives the thirst and takes the dew; ^D
Till eve bring rest when other good things pass. ^e
And here the lost hours the lost hours renew ^e
While I still lead my shadow o'er the grass, ^f
Nor know, for longing, that which I should do. ^e

SONNET LXXI

THE HILL SUMMIT

THIS feast-day of the sun, his altar there
In the broad west has blazed for vesper-song ;
And I have loitered in the vale too long
And gaze now a belated worshipper.
Yet may I not forget that I was 'ware,
So journeying, of his face at intervals
Transfigured where the fringed horizon falls, —
A fiery bush with coruscating hair.

And now that I have climbed and won this height,
I must tread downward through the sloping shade
And travel the bewildered tracks till night.
Yet for this hour I still may here be stayed
And see the gold air and the silver fade
And the last bird fly into the last light.

THE CHOICE

I

EAT thou and drink ; to-morrow thou shalt die.
Surely the earth, that's wise being very old,
Needs not our help. Then loose me, love, and hold
Thy sultry hair up from my face ; that I
May pour for thee this yellow wine, brim-high,
Till round the glass thy fingers glow like gold.
We'll drown all hours : thy song, while hours are toll'd,
Shall leap, as fountains veil the changing sky.

Now kiss, and think that there are really those,
My own high-bosomed beauty, who increase
Vain gold, vain lore, and yet might choose our way !
Through many days they toil ; then comes a day
They die not, — never having lived, — but cease ;
And round their narrow lips the mould falls close.

II

WATCH thou and fear ; to-morrow thou shalt die.
Or art thou sure thou shalt have time for death?
Is not the day which God's word promiseth
To come man knows not when? In yonder sky,
Now while we speak, the sun speeds forth : can I
Or thou assure him of his goal? God's breath
Even at this moment haply quickeneth
The air to a flame ; till spirits, always nigh
Though screened and hid, shall walk the daylight here.
And dost thou prate of all that man shall do?
Canst thou, who hast but plagues, presume to be
Glad in his gladness that comes after thee?
Will *his* strength slay *thy* worm in Hell? Go to :
Cover thy countenance, and watch, and fear.

III

THINK thou and act; to-morrow thou shalt die.
Outstretched in the sun's warmth upon the shore,
Thou say'st: "Man's measured path is all gone o'er:
Up all his years, steeply, with strain and sigh,
Man clomb until he touched the truth; and I,
Even I, am he whom it was destined for."
How should this be? Art thou then so much more
Than they who sowed, that thou shouldst reap thereby?

Nay, come up hither. From this wave-washed mound
Unto the furthest flood-brim look with me;
Then reach on with thy thought till it be drown'd.
Miles and miles distant though the grey line be,
And though thy soul sail leagues and leagues beyond,—
Still, leagues beyond those leagues, there is more sea.

OLD AND NEW ART

I

ST. LUKE THE PAINTER

GIVE honour unto Luke Evangelist ;
For he it was (the aged legends say)
Who first taught Art to fold her hands and pray.
Scarcely at once she dared to rend the mist
Of devious symbols : but soon having wist
How sky-breadth and field-silence and this day
Are symbols also in some deeper way,
She looked through these to God and was God's priest.

And if, past noon, her toil began to irk,
And she sought talismans, and turned in vain
To soulless self-reflections of man's skill, —
Yet now, in this the twilight, she might still
Kneel in the latter grass to pray again,
Ere the night cometh and she may not work.

II

*1845
Lanet*
NOT AS THESE

“ I AM not as these are,” the poet saith
 I In youth’s pride, and the painter, among men
 At bay, where never pencil comes nor pen,
And shut about with his own frozen breath.
To others, for whom only rhyme wins faith
 As poets, — only paint as painters, — then
 He turns in the cold silence; and again
Shrinking, “ I am not as these are,” he saith.

And say that this is so, what follows it?
 For were thine eyes set backwards in thine head,
 Such words were well; but they see on, and far.
Unto the lights of the great Past, new-lit
 Fair for the Future’s track, look thou instead, —
 Say thou instead, “ I am not as *these* are.”

III

THE HUSBANDMEN

THOUGH God, as one that is an householder,
Called these to labour in his vineyard first,
Before the husk of darkness was well burst
Bidding them grope their way out and bestir,
(Who, questioned of their wages, answered, “ Sir,
Unto each man a penny :”) though the worst
Burthen of heat was theirs and the dry thirst :
Though God hath since found none such as these were
To do their work like them :— Because of this
Stand not ye idle in the market-place.

Which of ye knoweth *he* is not that last
Who may be first by faith and will?— yea, his
The hand which after the appointed days
And hours shall give a Future to their Past?

SONNET LXXVIII

SOUL'S BEAUTY

UNDER the arch of Life, where love and death,
 Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw
 Beauty enthroned; and though her gaze struck awe,
I drew it in as simply as my breath.
Hers are the eyes which, over and beneath,
 The sky and sea bend on thee, — which can draw,
 By sea or sky or woman, to one law,
The allotted bondman of her palm and wreath.

This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise
 Thy voice and hand shake still, — long known to thee
 By flying hair and fluttering hem, — the beat
 Following her daily of thy heart and feet,
 How passionately and irretrievably,
In what fond flight, how many ways and days!

SONNET LXXIX

BODY'S BEAUTY

OF Adam's first wife, Lilith, it is told
(the witch he loved before the gift of Eve,) That, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue could deceive,
And her enchanted hair was the first gold.
And still she sits, young while the earth is old,
 And, subtly of herself contemplative,
 Draws men to watch the bright web she can weave,
Till heart and body and life are in its hold.

The rose and poppy are her flowers ; for where
 Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent
And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare ?
 Lo ! as that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went
 Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent
And round his heart one strangling golden hair.

SONNET LXXX

THE MONOCHORD

IS it this sky's vast vault or ocean's sound
That is Life's self and draws my life from me,
And by instinct ineffable decree
Holds my breath quailing on the bitter bound?
Nay, is it Life or Death, thus thunder-crown'd,
That 'mid the tide of all emergency
Now notes my separate wave, and to what sea
Its difficult eddies labour in the ground?

Oh! what is this that knows the road I came,
The flame turned cloud, the cloud returned to flame,
The lifted shifted steeps and all the way? —
That draws round me at last this wind-warm space,
And in regenerate rapture turns my face
Upon the devious coverts of dismay?

SONNET LXXXI

FROM DAWN TO NOON

AS the child knows not if his mother's face
Be fair ; nor of his elders yet can deem
What each most is ; but as of hill or stream
At dawn, all glimmering life surrounds his place :
Who yet, tow'rd noon of his half-weary race,
Pausing awhile beneath the high sun-beam
And gazing steadily back, — as through a dream,
In things long past new features now can trace : —

Even so the thought that is at length fullgrown
Turns back to note the sun-smit paths, all grey
And marvellous once, where first it walked alone ;
And haply doubts, amid the unblenching day,
Which most or least impelled its onward way, —
Those unknown things or these things overknown.

SONNET LXXXII

MEMORIAL THRESHOLDS

WHAT place so strange, — though unrevealèd snow
With unimaginable fires arise
At the earth's end, — what passion of surprise
Like frost-bound fire-girt scenes of long ago?
Lo! this is none but I this hour ; and lo!
This is the very place which to mine eyes
Those mortal hours in vain immortalize,
'Mid hurrying crowds, with what alone I know.

City, of thine a single simple door,
By some new Power reduplicate, must be
Even yet my life-porch in eternity,
Even with one presence filled, as once of yore :
Or mocking winds whirl round a chaff-strown floor
Thee and thy years and these my words and me.

SONNET LXXXIII

HOARDED JOY

I SAID: "Nay, pluck not, — let the first fruit be :
Even as thou sayest, it is sweet and red,
But let it ripen still. The tree's bent head
Sees in the stream its own fecundity
And bides the day of fulness. Shall not we
At the sun's hour that day possess the shade,
And claim our fruit before its ripeness fade,
And eat it from the branch and praise the tree?"

I say: "Alas! our fruit hath wooed the sun
Too long, — 'tis fallen and floats adown the stream.
Lo, the last clusters! Pluck them every one,
And let us sup with summer; ere the gleam
Of autumn set the year's pent sorrow free,
And the woods wail like echoes from the sea."

SONNET LXXXIV

BARREN SPRING

SO now the changed year's turning wheel returns :
And as a girl sails balanced in the wind,
And now before and now again behind
Stoops as it swoops, with cheek that laughs and burns, —
So Spring comes merry towards me now, but earns
No answering smile from me, whose life is twin'd
With the dead boughs that winter still must bind,
And whom to-day the Spring no more concerns.

Behold, this crocus is a withering flame ;
This snowdrop, snow ; this apple-blossom's part
To breed the fruit that breeds the serpent's art.
Nay, for these Spring-flowers, turn thy face from them,
Nor gaze till on the year's last lily-stem
The white cup shrivels round the golden heart.

SONNET LXXXV

FAREWELL TO THE GLEN

SWEET stream-fed glen, why say "farewell" to thee
Who far'st so well and find'st for ever smooth
The brow of Time where man may read no ruth?
Nay, do thou rather say "farewell" to me,
Who now fare forth in bitterer fantasy
Than erst was mine where other shade might soothe
By other streams, what while in fragrant youth
The bliss of being sad made melancholy.

And yet, farewell! For better shalt thou fare
When children bathe sweet faces in thy flow
And happy lovers blend sweet shadows there
In hours to come, than when an hour ago
Thine echoes had but one man's sighs to bear
And thy trees whispered what he feared to know.

SONNET LXXXVI

VAIN VIRTUES

WHAT is the sorriest thing that enters Hell?
None of the sins, — but this and that fair deed
Which a soul's sin at length could supersede.
These yet are virgins, whom death's timely knell
Might once have sainted; whom the fiends compel
Together now, in snake-bound shuddering sheaves
Of anguish, while the scorching bridegroom leaves
Their refuse maidenhood abominable.

Night sucks them down, the garbage of the pit,
Whose names, half entered in the book of Life,
Were God's desire at noon. And as their hair
And eyes sink last, the Torturer deigns no whit
To gaze, but, yearning, waits his worthier wife,
The Sin still blithe on earth that sent them there.

SONNET LXXXVII

LOST DAYS

THE lost days of my life until to-day,
What were they, could I see them on the street
Lie as they fell? Would they be ears of wheat
Sown once for food but trodden into clay?
Or golden coins squandered and still to pay?
Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet?
Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat
The throats of men in Hell, who thirst alway?

I do not see them here ; but after death
God knows I know the faces I shall see,
Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.
“I am thyself, — what hast thou done to me?”
“And I — and I — thyself,” (lo ! each one saith,)
“And thou thyself to all eternity !”

SONNET LXXXVIII

DEATH'S SONGSTERS

WHEN first that horse, within whose populous womb
The birth was death, o'ershadowed Troy with fate,
Her elders, dubious of its Grecian freight,
Brought Helen there to sing the songs of home ;
She whispered, " Friends, I am alone ; come, come !"
Then, crouched within, Ulysses waxed afraid,
And on his comrades' quivering mouths he laid
His hands, and held them till the voice was dumb.

The same was he who, lashed to his own mast,
There where the sea-flowers screen the charnel-caves,
Beside the sirens' singing island pass'd,
Till sweetness failed along the inveterate waves. . . .
Say, soul, — are songs of Death no heaven to thee,
Nor shames her lip the cheek of Victory?

SONNET LXXXIX

HERO'S LAMP*

THAT lamp thou fill'st in Eros' name to-night,
O Hero, shall the Sestian augurs take
To-morrow, and for drowned Leander's sake
To Anteros its fireless lip shall plight.
Aye, waft the unspoken vow : yet dawn's first light
On ebbing storm and life twice ebb'd must break ;
While 'neath no sunrise, by the Avernian Lake,
Lo where Love walks, Death's pallid neophyte.

That lamp within Anteros' shadowy shrine
Shall stand unlit (for so the gods decree)
Till some one man the happy issue see
Of a life's love, and bid its flame to shine :
Which still may rest unfir'd ; for, theirs or thine,
O brother, what brought love to them or thee ?

* After the deaths of Leander and of Hero, the signal-lamp was dedicated to Anteros, with the edict that no man should light it unless his love had proved fortunate.

SONNET XC

THE TREES OF THE GARDEN

YE who have passed Death's haggard hills; and ye
Whom trees that knew your sires shall cease to know
And still stand silent:— is it all a show, —
A wisp that laughs upon the wall? — decree
Of some inexorable supremacy
Which ever, as man strains his blind surmise
From depth to ominous depth, looks past his eyes,
Sphinx-faced with unabashèd augury?

Nay, rather question the Earth's self. Invoke
The storm-felled forest-trees moss-grown to-day
Whose roots are hillocks where the children play;
Or ask the silver sapling 'neath what yoke
Those stars, his spray-crown's clustering gems, shall wage
Their journey still when his boughs shrink with age.

SONNET XCI

“RETRO ME, SATHANA!”

GET thee behind me. Even as, heavy-curled,
Stooping against the wind, a charioteer
Is snatched from out his chariot by the hair,
So shall Time be; and as the void car, hurled
Abroad by reinless steeds, even so the world:
Yea, even as chariot-dust upon the air,
It shall be sought and not found anywhere.
Get thee behind me, Satan. Oft unfurled,
Thy perilous wings can beat and break like lath
Much mightiness of men to win thee praise.
Leave these weak feet to tread in narrow ways.
Thou still, upon the broad vine-sheltered path,
Mayst wait the turning of the phials of wrath
For certain years, for certain months and days.

SONNET XCII

LOST ON BOTH SIDES

AS when two men have loved a woman well,
Each hating each, through Love's and Death's deceit ;
Since not for either this stark marriage-sheet
And the long pauses of this wedding-bell ;
Yet o'er her grave the night and day dispel
At last their feud forlorn, with cold and heat ;
Nor other than dear friends to death may fleet
The two lives left that most of her can tell : —

So separate hopes, which in a soul had wooed
The one same Peace, strove with each other long,
And Peace before their faces perished since :
So through that soul, in restless brotherhood,
They roam together now, and wind among
Its bye-streets, knocking at the dusty inns.

SONNETS XCIII., XCIV

THE SUN'S SHAME

I

BEHOLDING youth and hope in mockery caught
From life ; and mocking pulses that remain
When the soul's death of bodily death is fain ;
Honour unknown, and honour known unsought ;
And penury's sedulous self-torturing thought
On gold, whose master therewith buys his bane ;
And longed-for woman longing all in vain
For lonely man with love's desire distraught ;
And wealth, and strength, and power, and pleasantness,
Given unto bodies of whose souls men say,
None poor and weak, slavish and foul, as they : —
Beholding these things, I behold no less
The blushing morn and blushing eve confess
The shame that loads the intolerable day.

II

AS some true chief of men, bowed down with stress
Of life's disastrous eld, on blossoming youth
May gaze, and murmur with self-pity and ruth, —
“ Might I thy fruitless treasure but possess,
Such blessing of mine all coming years should bless ; ” —
Then sends one sigh forth to the unknown goal,
And bitterly feels breathe against his soul
The hour swift-winged of nearer nothingness : —

Even so the World's grey Soul to the green World
Perchance one hour must cry : “ Woe's me, for whom
Inveteracy of ill portends the doom, —
Whose heart's old fire in shadow of shame is furl'd :
While thou even as of yore art journeying,
All soulless now, yet merry with the Spring ! ”

SONNET XCV

MICHELANGELO'S KISS

GREAT Michelangelo, with age grown bleak
And uttermost labours, having once o'ersaid
All grievous memories on his long life shed,
This worst regret to one true heart could speak : —
That when, with sorrowing love and reverence meek,
He stooped o'er sweet Colonna's dying bed,
His Muse and dominant Lady, spirit-wed, —
Her hand he kissed, but not her brow or cheek.

O Buonarruoti, — good at Art's fire-wheels
To urge her chariot! — even thus the Soul,
Touching at length some sorely-chastened goal,
Earns oftenest but a little : her appeals
Were deep and mute, — lowly her claim. Let be :
What holds for her Death's garner? And for thee?

SONNET XCVI

THE VASE OF LIFE

AROUND the vase of Life at your slow pace
He has not crept, but turned it with his hands,
And all its sides already understands.
There, girt, one breathes alert for some great race ;
Whose road runs far by sands and fruitful space ;
Who laughs, yet through the jolly throng has pass'd ;
Who weeps, nor stays for weeping ; who at last,
A youth, stands somewhere crowned, with silent face.

And he has filled this vase with wine for blood,
With blood for tears, with spice for burning vow,
With watered flowers for buried love most fit ;
And would have cast it shattered to the flood,
Yet in Fate's name has kept it whole ; which now
Stands empty till his ashes fall in it.

SONNET XC VII

LIFE THE BELOVED

AS thy friend's face, with shadow of soul o'erspread,
Somewhile unto thy sight perchance hath been
Ghastly and strange, yet never so is seen
In thought, but to all fortunate favour wed ;
As thy love's death-bound features never dead
To memory's glass return, but contravene
Frail fugitive days, and always keep, I ween,
Than all new life a livelier lovelihead : —

So Life herself, thy spirit's friend and love,
Even still as Spring's authentic harbinger
Glow with fresh hours for hope to glorify ;
Though pale she lay when in the winter grove
Her funeral flowers were snow-flakes shed on her
And the red wings of frost-fire rent the sky.

SONNET XCVIII

A SUPERScription

LOOK in my face ; my name is Might-have-been ;
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell ;
 Unto thine ear I hold the dead-sea shell
Cast up thy Life's foam-fretted feet between ;
Unto thine eyes the glass where that is seen
 Which had Life's form and Love's, but by my spell
 Is now a shaken shadow intolerable,
Of ultimate things unuttered the frail screen.

Mark me, how still I am ! But should there dart
 One moment through thy soul the soft surprise
 Of that winged Peace which lulls the breath of sighs,—
Then shalt thou see me smile, and turn apart
Thy visage to mine ambush at thy heart
 Sleepless with cold commemorative eyes.

SONNET XCIX

HE AND I

WHENCE came his feet into my field, and why?
How is it that he sees it all so drear?
How do I see his seeing, and how hear
The name his bitter silence knows it by?
This was the little fold of separate sky
Whose pasturing clouds in the soul's atmosphere
Drew living light from one continual year:
How should he find it lifeless? He, or I?

Lo! this new Self now wanders round my field,
With plaints for every flower, and for each tree
A moan, the sighing wind's auxiliary:
And o'er sweet waters of my life, that yield
Unto his lips no draught but tears unseal'd,
Even in my place he weeps. Even I, not he.

NEWBORN DEATH

I

TO-DAY Death seems to me an infant child
Which her worn mother Life upon my knee
Has set to grow my friend and play with me ;
If haply so my heart might be beguil'd
To find no terrors in a face so mild,—
If haply so my weary heart might be
Unto the newborn milky eyes of thee,
O Death, before resentment reconcil'd.

How long, O Death? And shall thy feet depart
Still a young child's with mine, or wilt thou stand
Fullgrown the helpful daughter of my heart,
What time with thee indeed I reach the strand
Of the pale wave which knows thee what thou art,
And drink it in the hollow of thy hand?

II

AND thou, O Life, the lady of all bliss,
With whom, when our first heart beat full and fast,
I wandered till the haunts of men were pass'd,
And in fair places found all bowers amiss
Till only woods and waves might hear our kiss,
While to the winds all thought of Death we cast :—
Ah, Life! and must I have from thee at last
No smile to greet me and no babe but this?

Lo! Love, the child once ours; and Song, whose hair
Blew like a flame and blossomed like a wreath;
And Art, whose eyes were worlds by God found fair;
These o'er the book of Nature mixed their breath
With neck-twined arms, as oft we watched them there:
And did these die that thou mightst bear me Death?

SONNET CII

THE ONE HOPE

WHEN all desire at last and all regret
Go hand in hand to death, and all is vain,
What shall assuage the unforgotten pain
And teach the unforgetful to forget?
Shall Peace be still a sunk stream long unmet,—
Or may the soul at once in a green plain
Stoop through the spray of some sweet life-fountain
And cull the dew-drenched flowering amulet?

Ah! when the wan soul in that golden air
Between the scriptured petals softly blown
Peers breathless for the gift of grace unknown,—
Ah! let none other written spell soe'er
But only the one Hope's one name be there,—
Not less nor more, but even that word alone.

LYRICS

&c.



SOOTHSAY

LET no man ask thee of anything
Not yearborn between Spring and Spring.
More of all worlds than he can know,
Each day the single sun doth show.
A trustier gloss than thou canst give
From all wise scrolls demonstrative,
The sea doth sigh and the wind sing.

Let no man awe thee on any height
Of earthly kingship's mouldering might.
The dust his heel holds meet for thy brow
Hath all of it been what both are now ;
And thou and he may plague together
A beggar's eyes in some dusty weather
When none that is now knows sound or sight.

Crave thou no dower of earthly things
Unworthy Hope's imaginings.
To have brought true birth of Song to be
And to have won hearts to Poesy,

SOOTHSAY

Or anywhere in the sun or rain
To have loved and been beloved again,
Is loftiest reach of Hope's bright wings.

The wild waifs cast up by the sea
Are diverse ever seasonably.
Even so the soul-tides still may land
A different drift upon the sand.
But one the sea is evermore :
And one be still, 'twixt shore and shore,
As the sea's life, thy soul in thee.

Say, hast thou pride? How then may fit
Thy mood with flatterers' silk-spun wit?
Haply the sweet voice lifts thy crest,
A breeze of fame made manifest.
Nay, but then chaf'st at flattery? Pause :
Be sure thy wrath is not because
It makes thee feel thou lovest it.

Let thy soul strive that still the same
Be early friendship's sacred flame.
The affinities have strongest part
In youth, and draw men heart to heart :
As life wears on and finds no rest,
The individual in each breast
Is tyrannous to sunder them.

SOOTHSAY

In the life-drama's stern cue-call,
A friend's a part well-prized by all :
And if thou meet an enemy,
What art thou that none such should be?
Even so : but if the two parts run
Into each other and grow one,
Then comes the curtain's cue to fall.

Whate'er by other's need is claimed
More than by thine, — to him unblamed
Resign it : and if he should hold
What more than he thou lack'st, bread, gold,
Or any good whereby we live, —
To thee such substance let him give
Freely : nor he nor thou be shamed.

Strive that thy works prove equal : lest
That work which thou hast done the best
Should come to be to thee at length
(Even as to envy seems the strength
Of others) hateful and abhorr'd, —
Thine own above thyself made lord, —
Of self-rebuke the bitterest.

Unto the man of yearning thought
And aspiration, to do nought
Is in itself almost an act, —
Being chasm-fire and cataract

SOOTHSAY

Of the soul's utter depths unseal'd.
Yet woe to thee if once thou yield
Unto the act of doing nought!

How callous seems beyond revoke
The clock with its last listless stroke!
How much too late at length! — to trace
The hour on its forewarning face,
The thing thou hast not dared to do!
Behold, this *may* be thus! Ere true
It prove, arise and bear thy yoke.

Let lore of all Theology
Be to thy soul what it *can* be:
But know, — the Power that fashions man
Measured not out thy little span
For thee to take the meting-rod
In turn, and so approve on God
Thy science of Theometry.

To God at best, to Chance at worst,
Give thanks for good things, last as first.
But windstrorn blossom is that good
Whose apple is not gratitude.
Even if no prayer uplift thy face,
Let the sweet right to render grace
As thy soul's cherished child be nurs'd.

SOOTHSAY

Didst ever say, "Lo, I forget?"
Such thought was to remember yet.
As in a gravegarth, count to see
The monuments of memory.
Be this thy soul's appointed scope:—
Gaze onward without claim to hope,
Nor, gazing backward, court regret.

CHIMES

I

HONEY-FLOWERS to the honey-comb
And the honey-bee's from home.

A honey-comb and a honey-flower,
And the bee shall have his hour.

A honeyed heart for the honey-comb,
And the humming bee flies home.

A heavy heart in the honey-flower,
And the bee has had his hour.

II

A HONEY-CELL'S in the honeysuckle,
And the honey-bee knows it well.

The honey-comb has a heart of honey,
And the humming bee's so bonny.

A honey-flower's the honeysuckle,
And the bee's in the honey-bell.

The honeysuckle is sucked of honey,
And the bee is heavy and bonny.

III

BROWN shell first for the butterfly
And a bright wing by and by.

Butterfly, good-bye to your shell,
And, bright wings, speed you well.

Bright lamplight for the butterfly
And a burnt wing by and by.

Butterfly, alas for your shell,
And, bright wings, fare you well.

IV

LOST love-labour and lullaby,
And lowly let love lie.

Lost love-morrow and love-fellow
And love's life lying low.

Lovelorn labour and life laid by
And lowly let love lie.

Late love-longing and life-sorrow
And love's life lying low.

V

BEAUTY'S body and benison
With a bosom-flower new-blown.

Bitter beauty and blessing bann'd
With a breast to burn and brand.

Beauty's bower in the dust o'erblown
With a bare white breast of bone.

Barren beauty and bower of sand
With a blast on either hand.

VI

BURIED bars in the breakwater
And bubble of the brimming weir.

Body's blood in the breakwater
And a buried body's bier.

Buried bones in the breakwater
And bubble of the brawling weir.

Bitter tears in the breakwater
And a breaking heart to bear.

VII

HOLLOW heaven and the hurricane
And hurry of the heavy rain.

Hurried clouds in the hollow heaven
And a heavy rain hard-driven.

The heavy rain it hurries amain
And heaven and the hurricane.

Hurrying wind o'er the heaven's hollow
And the heavy rain to follow.

PARTED PRESENCE

L OVE, I speak to your heart,
Your heart that is always here.
Oh draw me deep to its sphere,
Though you and I are apart ;
And yield, by the spirit's art,
Each distant gift that is dear.
O love, my love, you are here !

Your eyes are afar to-day,
Yet, love, look now in mine eyes.
Two hearts sent forth may despise
All dead things by the way.
All between is decay,
Dead hours and this hour that dies,
O love, look deep in mine eyes !

Your hands to-day are not here,
Yet lay them, love, in my hands.
The hourglass sheds its sands
All day for the dead hours' bier ;
But now, as two hearts draw near,
This hour like a flower expands.
O love, your hands in my hands !

PARTED PRESENCE

Your voice is not on the air,
Yet, love, I can hear your voice :
It bids my heart to rejoice
As knowing your heart is there, —
A music sweet to declare
The truth of your steadfast choice.
O love, how sweet is your voice !

To-day your lips are afar,
Yet draw my lips to them, love.
Around, beneath, and above,
Is frost to bind and to bar ;
But where I am and you are,
Desire and the fire thereof.
O kiss me, kiss me, my love !

Your heart is never away,
But ever with mine, for ever,
For ever without endeavour,
To-morrow, love, as to-day ;
Two blent hearts never astray,
Two souls no power may sever,
Together, O my love, for ever !

A DEATH-PARTING

L EAVES and rain and the days of the year,
(*Water-willow and wellaway,*)
All these fall, and my soul gives ear,
And she is hence who once was here.
(*With a wind blown night and day.*)

Ah! but now, for a secret sign,
(*The willow's wan and the water white,*)
In the held breath of the day's decline
Her very face seemed pressed to mine.
(*With a wind blown day and night.*)

O love, of my death my life is fain ;
(*The willows wave on the water-way,*)
Your cheek and mine are cold in the rain,
But warm they'll be when we meet again.
(*With a wind blown night and day.*)

Mists are heaved and cover the sky ;
(*The willows wail in the waning light,*)
O loose your lips, leave space for a sigh, —
They seal my soul, I cannot die.
(*With a wind blown day and night.*)

A DEATH-PARTING

Leaves and rain and the days of the year,

(*Water-willow and wellaway,*)

All still fall, and I still give ear,

And she is hence, and I am here.

(*With a wind blown night and day.*)

SPHERAL CHANGE

I N this new shade of Death, the show
I Passes me still of form and face ;
Some bent, some gazing as they go,
Some swiftly, some at a dull pace,
Not one that speaks in any case.

If only one might speak ! — the one
Who never waits till I come near ;
But always seated all alone
As listening to the sunken air,
Is gone before I come to her.

O dearest ! while we lived and died
A living death in every day,
Some hours we still were side by side,
When where I was you too might stay
And rest and need not go away.

O nearest, furthest ! Can there be
At length some hard-earned heart-won home,
Where, — exile changed for sanctuary, —
Our lot may fill indeed its sum,
And you may wait and I may come ?

SUNSET WINGS

TO-NIGHT this sunset spreads two golden wings
Cleaving the western sky ;
Winged too with wind it is, and winnowings
Of birds ; as if the day's last hour in rings
Of strenuous flight must die.

Sun-steeped in fire, the homeward pinions sway
Above the dovecote-tops ;
And clouds of starlings, ere they rest with day,
Sink, clamorous like mill-waters, at wild play,
By turns in every copse :

Each tree heart-deep the wrangling rout receives, —
Save for the whirr within,
You could not tell the starlings from the leaves ;
Then one great puff of wings, and the swarm heaves
Away with all its din.

Even thus Hope's hours, in ever-eddying flight,
To many a refuge tend ;
With the first light she laughed, and the last light
Glows round her still ; who nathless in the night
At length must make an end.

SUNSET WINGS

And now the mustering rooks innumerable
Together sail and soar,
While for the day's death, like a tolling knell,
Unto the heart they seem to cry, Farewell,
No more, farewell, no more!

Is Hope not plumed, as 'twere a fiery dart?
And oh! thou dying day,
Even as thou goest must she too depart,
And Sorrow fold such pinions on the heart
As will not fly away?

SONG AND MUSIC

O LEAVE your hand where it lies cool
Upon the eyes whose lids are hot :
Its rosy shade is bountiful
Of silence, and assuages thought.
O lay your lips against your hand
And let me feel your breath through it,
While through the sense your song shall fit
The soul to understand.

The music lives upon my brain
Between your hands within mine eyes ;
It stirs your lifted throat like pain,
An aching pulse of melodies.
Lean nearer, let the music pause :
The soul may better understand
Your music, shadowed in your hand,
Now while the song withdraws.

THREE SHADOWS

I LOOKED and saw your eyes
In the shadow of your hair,
As a traveller sees the stream
In the shadow of the wood ;
And I said, “ My faint heart sighs,
Ah me ! to linger there,
To drink deep and to dream
In that sweet solitude.”

I looked and saw your heart
In the shadow of your eyes,
As a seeker sees the gold
In the shadow of the stream ;
And I said, “ Ah me ! what art
Should win the immortal prize,
Whose want must make life cold
And Heaven a hollow dream ? ”

I looked and saw your love
In the shadow of your heart,
As a diver sees the pearl
In the shadow of the sea ;
And I murmured, not above
My breath, but all apart, —
“ Ah ! you can love, true girl,
And is your love for me ? ”

ALAS, SO LONG!

AH! dear one, we were young so long,
It seemed that youth would never go,
For skies and trees were ever in song
And water in singing flow
In the days we never again shall know.

Alas, so long!

Ah! then was it all Spring weather?
Nay, but we were young and together.

Ah! dear one, I've been old so long,
It seems that age is loth to part,
Though days and years have never a song,
And oh! have they still the art
That warmed the pulses of heart to heart?

Alas, so long!

Ah! then was it all Spring weather?
Nay, but we were young and together.

Ah! dear one, you've been dead so long,—
How long until we meet again,
Where hours may never lose their song
Nor flowers forget the rain
In glad noonlight that never shall wane?

Alas, so long!

Ah! shall it be then Spring weather,
And ah! shall we be young together?

ADIEU

WAVING whispering trees,
What do you say to the breeze
And what says the breeze to you?
'Mid passing souls ill at ease,
Moving murmuring trees,
Would ye ever wave an Adieu?

Tossing turbulent seas,
Winds that wrestle with these,
Echo heard in the shell,—
'Mid fleeting life ill at ease,
Restless ravening seas,—
Would the echo sigh Farewell?

Surging sumptuous skies,
For ever a new surprise,
Clouds eternally new,—
Is every flake that flies,
Widening wandering skies,
For a sign—Farewell, Adieu?

Sinking suffering heart
That know'st how weary thou art,—
Soul so fain for a flight,—
Aye, spread your wings to depart,
Sad soul and sorrowing heart,—
Adieu, Farewell, Good-night.

INSOMNIA

THIN are the night-skirts left behind
By daybreak hours that onward creep,
And thin, alas! the shred of sleep
That wavers with the spirit's wind :
But in half-dreams that shift and roll
And still remember and forget,
My soul this hour has drawn your soul
A little nearer yet.

Our lives, most dear, are never near,
Our thoughts are never far apart,
Though all that draws us heart to heart
Seems fainter now and now more clear.
To-night Love claims his full control,
And with desire and with regret
My soul this hour has drawn your soul
A little nearer yet.

Is there a home where heavy earth
Melts to bright air that breathes no pain,
Where water leaves no thirst again
And springing fire is Love's new birth?
If faith long bound to one true goal
May there at length its hope beget,
My soul that hour shall draw your soul
For ever nearer yet.

POSSESSION

THERE is a cloud above the sunset hill,
That wends and makes no stay,
For its goal lies beyond the fiery west ;
A lingering breath no calm can chase away,
The onward labour of the wind's last will ;
A flying foam that overleaps the crest
Of the top wave : and in possession still
A further reach of longing ; though at rest
From all the yearning years,
Together in the bosom of that day
Ye cling, and with your kisses drink your tears.

THE CLOUD CONFINES

THE day is dark and the night
To him that would search their heart ;
No lips of cloud that will part
Nor morning song in the light :
Only, gazing alone,
To him wild shadows are shown,
Deep under deep unknown
And height above unknown height.
Still we say as we go,—
“ Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day.”

The Past is over and fled ;
Named new, we name it the old ;
Thereof some tale hath been told,
But no word comes from the dead ;
Whether at all they be,
Or whether as bond or free,
Or whether they too were we,
Or by what spell they have sped.
Still we say as we go,—
“ Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day.”

THE CLOUD CONFINES

What of the heart of hate
That beats in thy breast, O Time? —
Red strife from the furthest prime,
And anguish of fierce debate ;
War that shatters her slain,
And peace that grinds them as grain,
And eyes fixed ever in vain
On the pitiless eyes of Fate.
Still we say as we go, —
“ Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day.”

What of the heart of love
That bleeds in thy breast, O Man? —
Thy kisses snatched 'neath the ban
Of fangs that mock them above ;
Thy bells prolonged unto knells,
Thy hope that a breath dispels,
Thy bitter forlorn farewells
And the empty echoes thereof ?
Still we say as we go, —
“ Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day.”

The sky leans dumb on the sea,
Aweary with all its wings ;
And oh ! the song the sea sings

THE CLOUD CONFINES

Is dark everlastingly.

Our past is clean forgot,

Our present is and is not,

Our future's a sealed seedplot,

And what betwixt them are we? —

We who say as we go, —

“Strange to think by the way,

Whatever there is to know,

That shall we know one day.”

SONNETS



FOR
THE HOLY FAMILY

BY MICHELANGELO

(In the National Gallery)*

TURN not the prophet's page, O Son! He knew
All that thou hast to suffer, and hath writ.
Not yet thine hour of knowledge. Infinite
The sorrows that thy manhood's lot must rue
And dire acquaintance of thy grief. That clue
The spirits of thy mournful ministerings
Seek through yon scroll in silence. For these things
The angels have desired to look into.

Still before Eden waves the fiery sword, —
Her Tree of Life unransomed: whose sad Tree
Of Knowledge yet to growth of Calvary
Must yield its Tempter, — Hell the earliest dead
Of Earth resign, — and yet, O Son and Lord,
The Seed o' the woman bruise the serpent's head.

* In this picture the Virgin Mother is seen withholding from the Child Saviour the prophetic writings in which his sufferings are foretold. Angelic figures beside them examine a scroll.

FOR
SPRING

BY SANDRO BOTTICELLI.

(In the Accademia of Florence)

WHAT masque of what old wind-withered New-Year
Honours this Lady? * Flora, wanton-eyed
For birth, and with all flowrets pranked and pied :
Aurora, Zephyrus, with mutual cheer
Of clasp and kiss : the Graces circling near,
'Neath bower-linked arch of white arms glorified :
And with those feathered feet which hovering glide
O'er Spring's brief bloom, Hermes the harbinger.

Birth-bare, not death-bare yet, the young stems stand,
This Lady's temple-columns : o'er her head
Love wings his shaft. What mystery here is read
Of homage or of hope? But how command
Dead Springs to answer? And how question here
These mummers of that wind-withered New-Year?

* The same lady, here surrounded by the masque of Spring, is evidently the subject of a portrait by Botticelli formerly in the Pourtalès collection in Paris. This portrait is inscribed "Smeralda Bandinelli."

FIVE ENGLISH POETS

I

THOMAS CHATTERTON

WITH Shakspeare's manhood at a boy's wild heart, —
Through Hamlet's doubt to Shakspeare near allied,
And kin to Milton through his Satan's pride, —
At Death's sole door he stooped, and craved a dart;
And to the dear new bower of England's art, —
Even to that shrine Time else had deified,
The unuttered heart that soared against his side, —
Drove the fell point, and smote life's seals apart.

Thy nested home-loves, noble Chatterton;
The angel-trodden stair thy soul could trace
Up Redcliffe's spire; and in the world's armed space
Thy gallant sword-play: — these to many an one
Are sweet for ever; as thy grave unknown
And love-dream of thine unrecorded face.

II

WILLIAM BLAKE

(TO FREDERICK SHIELDS, ON HIS SKETCH OF BLAKE'S
WORKROOM AND DEATH-ROOM, 3 FOUNTAIN
COURT, STRAND)

THIS is the place. Even here the dauntless soul,
The unflinching hand, wrought on ; till in that nook,
As on that very bed, his life partook
New birth, and passed. Yon river's dusky shoal,
Whereto the close-built coiling lanes unroll,
Faced his work-window, whence his eyes would stare,
Thought-wandering, unto nought that met them there,
But to the unfettered irreversible goal.

This cupboard, Holy of Holies, held the cloud
Of his soul writ and limned ; this other one,
His true wife's charge, full oft to their abode
Yielded for daily bread the martyr's stone,
Ere yet their food might be that Bread alone,
The words now home-speech of the mouth of God.

III

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

HIS Soul fared forth (as from the deep home-grove
The father-songster plies the hour-long quest,)
To feed his soul-brood hungering in the nest ;
But his warm Heart, the mother-bird, above
Their callow fledgling progeny still hove
With tented roof of wings and fostering breast
Till the Soul fed the soul-brood. Richly blest
From Heaven their growth, whose food was Human Love.

Yet ah ! Like desert pools that show the stars
Once in long leagues, — even such the scarce-snatched hours
Which deepening pain left to his lordliest powers : —
Heaven lost through spider-trammelled prison-bars.
Six years, from sixty saved ! Yet kindling skies
Own them, a beacon to our centuries.

IV

JOHN KEATS

THE weltering London ways where children weep
And girls whom none call maidens laugh,— strange road
Miring his outward steps, who inly trode
The bright Castalian brink and Latmos' steep: —
Even such his life's cross-paths; till deathly deep
He toiled through sands of Lethe; and long pain,
Weary with labour spurned and love found vain,
In dead Rome's sheltering shadow wrapped his sleep.

O pang-dowered Poet, whose reverberant lips
And heart-strung lyre awoke the Moon's eclipse, —
Thou whom the daisies glory in growing o'er,—
Their fragrance clings around thy name, not writ
But rumour'd in water, while the fame of it
Along Time's flood goes echoing evermore.

V

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

(INSCRIPTION FOR THE COUCH, STILL PRESERVED, ON WHICH
HE PASSED THE LAST NIGHT OF HIS LIFE)

'TWIXT those twin worlds,—the world of Sleep, which gave
No dream to warn, — the tidal world of Death,
Which the earth's sea, as the earth, replenisheth, —
Shelley, Song's orient sun, to breast the wave,
Rose from this couch that morn. Ah! did he brave
Only the sea? — or did man's deed of hell
Engulph his bark 'mid mists impenetrable?
No eye discerned, nor any power might save.

When that mist cleared, O Shelley! what dread veil
Was rent for thee, to whom far-darkling Truth
Reigned sovereign guide through thy brief ageless youth?
Was the Truth *thy* Truth, Shelley? — Hush! All-Hail,
Past doubt, thou gav'st it; and in Truth's bright sphere
Art first of praises, being most praised here.

TIBER, NILE, AND THAMES

THE head and hands of murdered Cicero,
Above his seat high in the Forum hung,
Drew jeers and burning tears. When on the rung
Of a swift-mounted ladder, all aglow,
Fulvia, Mark Antony's shameless wife, with show
Of foot firm-poised and gleaming arm upflung,
Bade her sharp needle pierce that god-like tongue
Whose speech fed Rome even as the Tiber's flow.

And thou, Cleopatra's Needle, that hadst thrid
Great skirts of Time ere she and Antony hid
Dead hope! — hast thou too reached, surviving death,
A city of sweet speech scorned, — on whose chill stone
Keats withered, Coleridge pined, and Chatterton,
Breadless, with poison froze the God-fired breath?

THE
LAST THREE FROM TRAFALGAR

AT THE ANNIVERSARY BANQUET,
21ST OCTOBER, 187*

IN grappled ships around The Victory,
Three boys did England's Duty with stout cheer,
While one dread truth was kept from every ear,
More dire than deafening fire that churned the sea :
For in the flag-ship's weltering cockpit, he
Who was the Battle's Heart without a peer,
He who had seen all fearful sights save Fear,
Was passing from all life save Victory.

And round the old memorial board to-day,
Three greybeards — each a warworn British Tar —
View through the mist of years that hour afar :
Who soon shall greet, 'mid memories of fierce fray,
The impassioned soul which on its radiant way
Soared through the fiery cloud of Trafalgar.

CZAR ALEXANDER THE SECOND

(13TH MARCH, 1881)

FROM him did forty million serfs, endow'd
Each with six feet of death-due soil, receive
Rich freeborn lifelong land, whereon to sheave
Their country's harvest. These to-day aloud
Demand of Heaven a Father's blood, — sore bow'd
With tears and thrilled with wrath ; who, while they grieve,
On every guilty head would fain achieve
All torment by his edicts disallow'd.

He stayed the knout's red-ravening fangs ; and first
Of Russian traitors, his own murderers go
White to the tomb. While he, — laid foully low
With limbs red-rent, with festering brain which erst
Willed kingly freedom, — 'gainst the deed accurst
To God bears witness of his people's woe.

WORDS ON THE WINDOW-PANE*

DID she in summer write it, or in spring,
Or with this wail of autumn at her ears,
Or in some winter left among old years
Scratched it through lettered cark? A certain thing
That round her heart the frost was hardening,
Not to be thawed of tears, which on this pane
Channelled the rime, perchance, in fevered rain,
For false man's sake and love's most bitter sting.

Howbeit, between this last word and the next
Unwritten, subtly seasoned was the smart,
And here at least the grace to weep: if she,
Rather, midway in her disconsolate text,
Rebelled not, loathing from the trodden heart
That thing which she had found man's love to be.

* For a woman's fragmentary inscription.

W I N T E R

HOW large that thrush looks on the bare thorn-tree !
A swarm of such, three little months ago,
Had hidden in the leaves and let none know
Save by the outburst of their minstrelsy.
A white flake here and there — a snow-lily
Of last night's frost — our naked flower-beds hold ;
And for a rose-flower on the darkling mould
The hungry redbreast gleams. No bloom, no bee.

The current shudders to its ice-bound sedge :
Nipped in their bath, the stark reeds one by one
Flash each its clinging diamond in the sun :
'Neath winds which for this Winter's sovereign pledge
Shall curb great king-masts to the ocean's edge
And leave memorial forest-kings o'erthrown.

SPRING

SOFT-LITTERED is the new-year's lambing-fold,
And in the hollowed haystack at its side
The shepherd lies o' nights now, wakeful-eyed
At the ewes' travailing call through the dark cold.
The young rooks cheep 'mid the thick caw o' the old:
And near unpeopled stream-sides, on the ground,
By her spring-cry the moorhen's nest is found,
Where the drained flood-lands flaunt their marigold.

Chill are the gusts to which the pastures cower,
And chill the current where the young reeds stand
As green and close as the young wheat on land:
Yet here the cuckoo and the cuckoo-flower
Plight to the heart Spring's perfect imminent hour
Whose breath shall soothe you like your dear one's hand.

THE CHURCH-PORCH

SISTER, first shake we off the dust we have
Upon our feet, lest it defile the stones
Inscriptured, covering their sacred bones
Who lie i' the aisles which keep the names they gave,
Their trust abiding round them in the grave ;
Whom painters paint for visible orisons,
And to whom sculptors pray in stone and bronze ;
Their voices echo still like a spent wave.

Without here, the church-bells are but a tune,
And on the carven church-door this hot noon
Lays all its heavy sunshine here without :
But having entered in, we shall find there
Silence, and sudden dimness, and deep prayer,
And faces of crowned angels all about.

UNTIMELY LOST

(OLIVER MADOX BROWN. BORN 1855; DIED 1874)

UPON the landscape of his coming life
A youth high-gifted gazed, and found it fair :
The heights of work, the floods of praise, were there.
What friendships, what desires, what love, what wife? —
All things to come. The fanned springtide was rife
With imminent solstice ; and the ardent air
Had summer sweets and autumn fires to bear ; —
Heart's ease full-pulsed with perfect strength for strife.

A mist has risen : we see the youth no more :
Does *he* see on and strive on? And may we
Late-tottering worldworn hence, find *his* to be
The young strong hand which helps us up that shore?
Or, echoing the No More with Nevermore,
Must Night be ours and his? We hope : and he?

PLACE DE LA BASTILLE, PARIS

HOW dear the sky has been above this place !
Small treasures of this sky that we see here
Seen weak through prison-bars from year to year ;
Eyed with a painful prayer upon God's grace
To save, and tears that stayed along the face
Lifted at sunset. Yea, how passing dear,
Those nights when through the bars a wind left clear
The heaven, and moonlight soothed the limpid space !

So was it, till one night the secret kept
Safe in low vault and stealthy corridor
Was blown abroad on gospel-tongues of flame.
O ways of God, mysterious evermore !
How many on this spot have cursed and wept
That all might stand here now and own Thy Name.

“FOUND”

(For a Picture)

“THERE is a budding morrow in midnight :” —
So sang our Keats, our English nightingale.
And here, as lamps across the bridge turn pale
In London’s smokeless resurrection-light,
Dark breaks to dawn. But o’er the deadly blight
Of love deflowered and sorrow of none avail
Which makes this man gasp and this woman quail,
Can day from darkness ever again take flight?

Ah! gave not these two hearts their mutual pledge,
Under one mantle sheltered ’neath the hedge
In gloaming courtship? And O God! to-day
He only knows he holds her; — but what part
Can life now take? She cries in her locked heart, —
“Leave me — I do not know you — go away!”

A SEA-SPELL

(For a Picture)

HER lute hangs shadowed in the apple-tree,
While flashing fingers weave the sweet-strung spell
Between its chords; and as the wild notes swell,
The sea-bird for those branches leaves the sea.
But to what sound her listening ear stoops she?
What netherworld gulf-whispers doth she hear,
In answering echoes from what planisphere,
Along the wind, along the estuary?

She sinks into her spell: and when full soon
Her lips move and she soars into her song,
What creatures of the midmost main shall throng
In furrowed surf-clouds to the summoning rune: *myster*
Till he, the fated mariner, hears her cry,
And up her rock, bare-breasted, comes to die?

FIAMMETTA

(For a Picture)

BEHOLD Fiammetta, shown in Vision here.
Gloom-girt 'mid Spring-flushed apple-growth she stands ;
And as she sways the branches with her hands,
Along her arm the sundered bloom falls sheer,
In separate petals shed, each like a tear ;
While from the quivering bough the bird expands
His wings. And lo ! thy spirit understands
Life shaken and shower'd and flown, and Death drawn near.

All stirs with change. Her garments beat the air :
The angel circling round her aureole
Shimmers in flight against the tree's grey bole :
While she, with reassuring eyes most fair,
A presage and a promise stands ; as 'twere
On Death's dark storm the rainbow of the Soul.

THE DAY-DREAM

(For a Picture)

THE thronged boughs of the shadowy sycamore
Still bear young leaflets half the summer through ;
From when the robin 'gainst the unhidden blue
Perched dark, till now, deep in the leafy core,
The embowered throstle's urgent wood-notes soar
Through summer silence. Still the leaves come new ;
Yet never rosy-sheathed as those which drew
Their spiral tongues from spring-buds heretofore.

Within the branching shade of Reverie
Dreams even may spring till autumn ; yet none be
Like woman's budding day-dream spirit-fann'd.
Lo ! tow'rd deep skies, not deeper than her look,
She dreams ; till now on her forgotten book
Drops the forgotten blossom from her hand.

ASTARTE SYRIACA

(For a Picture)

MYSTERY : lo ! betwixt the sun and moon
Astarte of the Syrians : Venus Queen
Ere Aphrodite was. In silver sheen
Her twofold girdle clasps the infinite boon
Of bliss whereof the heaven and earth commune :
And from her neck's inclining flower-stem lean
Love-freighted lips and absolute eyes that wean
The pulse of hearts to the spheres' dominant tune.

Torch-bearing, her sweet ministers compel
All thrones of light beyond the sky and sea
The witnesses of Beauty's face to be :
That face, of Love's all-penetrative spell
Amulet, talisman, and oracle, —
Betwixt the sun and moon a mystery.

PROSERPINA

(Per un Quadro)

LUNGI è la luce che in sù questo muro
Rifrange appena, un breve istante scorta
Del rio palazzo alla soprana porta.
Lungi quei fiori d'Enna, O lido oscuro,
Dal frutto tuo fatal che omai m'è duro.
Lungi quel cielo dal tartareo manto
Che quì mi cuopre : e lungi ahì lungi ahì quanto
Le notti che saràn dai dì che furo.

Lungi da me mi sento ; e ognor sognando
Cerco e ricerco, e resto ascoltatrice ;
E qualche cuore a qualche anima dice,
(Di cui mi giunge il suon da quando in quando,
Continuamente insieme sospirando,) —
“ Oimè per te, Proserpina infelice !”

PROSERPINA

(For a Picture)

A FAR away the light that brings cold cheer
Unto this wall, — one instant and no more
Admitted at my distant palace-door.
Afar the flowers of Enna from this drear
Dire fruit, which, tasted once, must thrall me here.
Afar those skies from this Tartarean grey
That chills me: and afar, how far away,
The nights that shall be from the days that were.

Afar from mine own self I seem, and wing
Strange ways in thought, and listen for a sign:
And still some heart unto some soul doth pine,
(Whose sounds mine inner sense is fain to bring,
Continually together murmuring,) —
“Woe’s me for thee, unhappy Proserpine!”

LA BELLA MANO

(Per un Quadro)

O BELLA Mano, che ti lavi e piaci
In quel medesimo tuo puro elemento
Donde la Dea dell' amoroso avvento
Nacque, (e dall' onda s' infuocar le faci
Di mille inispegnibili fornaci) : —
Come a Venere a te l'oro e l'argento
Offron gli Amori ; e ognun riguarda attento
La bocca che sorride e te che taci.

In dolce modo dove onor t' invii
Vattene adorna, e porta insiem fra tante
Di Venere e di vergine sembante ;
Umilmente in luoghi onesti e pii
Bianca e soave ognora ; infin che sii,
O Mano, mansueta in man d'amante.

LA BELLA MANO

(For a Picture)

O LOVELY hand, that thy sweet self dost lave
In that thy pure and proper element,
Whence erst the Lady of Love's high advent
Was born, and endless fires sprang from the wave:—
Even as her Loves to her their offerings gave,
For thee the jewelled gifts they bear; while each
Looks to those lips, of music-measured speech
The fount, and of more bliss than man may crave.

In royal wise ring-girt and bracelet-spann'd,
A flower of Venus' own virginity,
Go shine among thy sisterly sweet band;
In maiden-minded converse delicately
Evermore white and soft; until thou be,
O hand! heart-handsel'd in a lover's hand.



ADDITIONAL POEMS :

MDCCCLXXXVI



AT THE SUN-RISE IN 1848

GOD said, Let there be light; and there was light.
Then heard we sounds as though the Earth did sing
And the Earth's angel cried upon the wing:
We saw priests fall together and turn white:
And covered in the dust from the sun's sight,
A king was spied, and yet another king.
We said: "The round world keeps its balancing;
On this globe, they and we are opposite,—
If it is day with us, with them 'tis night.
Still, Man, in thy just pride, remember this:—
Thou hadst not made that thy sons' sons shall ask
What the word *king* may mean in their day's task,
But for the light that led: and if light is,
It is because God said, Let there be light.

AUTUMN SONG

KNOW'ST thou not at the fall of the leaf
How the heart feels a languid grief
Laid on it for a covering,
And how sleep seems a goodly thing
In Autumn at the fall of the leaf?

And how the swift beat of the brain
Falters because it is in vain,
In Autumn at the fall of the leaf
Knowest thou not? and how the chief
Of joys seems — not to suffer pain?

Know'st thou not at the fall of the leaf
How the soul feels like a dried sheaf
Bound up at length for harvesting,
And how death seems a comely thing
In Autumn at the fall of the leaf?

THE LADY'S LAMENT

NEVER happy any more !
Aye, turn the saying o'er and o'er,
It says but what it said before,
And heart and life are just as sore.
The wet leaves blow aslant the floor
In the rain through the open door.
No, no more.

Never happy any more !
The eyes are weary and give o'er,
But still the soul weeps as before.
And always must each one deplore
Each once, nor bear what others bore?
This is now as it was of yore.
No, no more.

Never happy any more !
Is it not but a sorry lore
That says, " Take strength, the worst is o'er? "
Shall the stars seem as heretofore?
The day wears on more and more—
While I was weeping the day wore.
No, no more.

THE LADY'S LAMENT

Never happy any more !
In the cold behind the door
That was the dial striking four :
One for joy the past hours bore,
Two for hope and will cast o'er,
One for the naked dark before.

No, no more.

Never happy any more !
Put the light out, shut the door,
Sweep the wet leaves from the floor.
Even thus Fate's hand has swept her floor,
Even thus Love's hand has shut the door
Through which his warm feet passed of yore.
Shall it be opened any more?

No, no, no more.

A TRIP TO PARIS AND BELGIUM

I

LONDON TO FOLKESTONE

A CONSTANT keeping-past of shaken trees,
And a bewildered glitter of loose road ;
Banks of bright growth, with single blades atop
Against white sky : and wires — a constant chain—
That seem to draw the clouds along with them
(Things which one stoops against the light to see
Through the low window ; shaking by at rest,
Or fierce like water as the swiftness grows) ;
And, seen through fences or a bridge far off,
Trees that in moving keep their intervals
Still one 'twixt bar and bar ; and then at times
Long reaches of green level, where one cow,
Feeding among her fellows that feed on,
Lifts her slow neck, and gazes for the sound.

Fields mown in ridges ; and close garden-crops
Of the earth's increase ; and a constant sky
Still with clear trees that let you see the wind ;
And snatches of the engine-smoke, by fits
Tossed to the wind against the landscape, where
Rooks stooping heave their wings upon the day.

A TRIP TO PARIS AND BELGIUM

Brick walls we pass between, passed so at once
That for the suddenness I cannot know
Or what, or where begun, or where at end.
Sometimes a station in grey quiet; whence,
With a short gathered champing of pent sound,
We are let out upon the air again.
Pauses of water soon, at intervals,
That has the sky in it;—the reflexes
O' the trees move towards the bank as we go by,
Leaving the water's surface plain. I now
Lie back and close my eyes a space; for they
Smart from the open forwardness of thought
Fronting the wind.

* * * * *

I did not scribble more,
Be certain, after this; but yawned, and read,
And nearly dozed a little, I believe;
Till, stretching up against the carriage-back,
I was roused altogether, and looked out
To where the pale sea brooded murmuring.

A TRIP TO PARIS AND BELGIUM

II

BOULOGNE TO AMIENS AND PARIS

STRONG extreme speed, that the brain hurries with,
Further than trees, and hedges, and green grass
Whitened by distance, — further than small pools
Held among fields and gardens, further than
Haystacks, and wind-mill-sails, and roofs and herds,—
The sea's last margin ceases at the sun.

The sea has left us, but the sun remains.
Sometimes the country spreads aloof in tracts
Smooth from the harvest; sometimes sky and land
Are shut from the square space the window leaves
By a dense crowd of trees, stem behind stem
Passing across each other as we pass:
Sometimes tall poplar-wands stand white, their heads
Outmeasuring the distant hills. Sometimes
The ground has a deep greenness; sometimes brown
In stubble; and sometimes no ground at all,
For the close strength of crops that stand unreaped.
The water-plots are sometimes all the sun's, —
Sometimes quite green through shadows filling them,

A TRIP TO PARIS AND BELGIUM

Or islanded with growths of reeds, — or else
Masked in grey dust like the wide face o' the fields.
And still the swiftness lasts; that to our speed
The trees seem shaken like a press of spears.

There is some count of us: — folks travelling capped,
Priesthood, and lank hard-featured soldiery,
Females (no women), blouses, Hunt, and I.

We are delayed at Amiens. The steam
Snorts, chafes, and bridles, like three hundred horse,
And flings its dusky mane upon the air.
Our company is thinned, and lamps alight.
But still there are the folks in travelling-caps,
No priesthood now, but always soldiery,
And babies to make up for show in noise;
Females (no women), blouses, Hunt, and I.

Our windows at one side are shut for warmth;
Upon the other side, a leaden sky,
Hung in blank glare, makes all the country dim,
Which too seems bald and meagre, — be it truth,
Or of the waxing darkness. Here and there
The shade takes light, where in thin patches stand
The unstirred dregs of water.

A TRIP TO PARIS AND BELGIUM

III

THE PARIS RAILWAY-STATION

I N France, (to baffle thieves and murderers)
A journey takes two days of passport work
At least. The plan's sometimes a tedious one,
But bears its fruit. Because, the other day,
In passing by the Morgue, we saw a man
(The thing is common, and we never should
Have known of it, only we passed that way)
Who had been stabbed and tumbled in the Seine,
Where he had stayed some days. The face was black,
And, like a negro's, swollen; all the flesh
Had furred, and broken into a green mould.

Now, very likely, he who did the job
Was standing among those who stood with us,
To look upon the corpse. You fancy him —
Smoking an early pipe, and watching, as
An artist, the effect of his last work.
This always if it had not struck him that
'Twere best to leave while yet the body took
Its crust of rot beneath the Seine. It may:
But, if it did not, he can now remain
Without much fear. *Only*, if he should want

A TRIP TO PARIS AND BELGIUM

To travel, and have not his passport yet,
(Deep dogs these French police!) he may be caught.

Therefore you see (lest, being murderers,
We should not have the sense to go before
The thing were known, or to stay afterwards)
There is good reason why — having resolved
To start for Belgium — we were kept three days
To learn about the passports first, then do
As we had learned. This notwithstanding, in
The fulness of the time 'tis come to pass.

A TRIP TO PARIS AND BELGIUM

IV

REACHING BRUSSELS

THERE is small change of country ; but the sun
Is out, and it seems shame this were not said.
For upon all the grass the warmth has caught ;
And betwixt distant whitened poplar-stems
Makes greener darkness ; and in dells of trees
Shows spaces of a verdure that was hid ;
And the sky has its blue floated with white,
And crossed with falls of the sun's glory aslant
To lay upon the waters of the world ;
And from the road men stand with shaded eyes
To look ; and flowers in gardens have grown strong ;
And our own shadows here within the coach
Are brighter ; and all colour has more bloom.

So, after the sore torments of the route ; —
Toothache, and headache, and the ache of wind,
And huddled sleep, and smarting wakefulness,
And night, and day, and hunger sick at food,
And twenty-fold relays, and packages
To be unlocked, and passports to be found,
And heavy well-kept landscape ; — we were glad
Because we entered Brussels in the sun.

A TRIP TO PARIS AND BELGIUM

V

ANTWERP TO GHENT

WE are upon the Scheldt. We know we move
Because there is a floating at our eyes
Whatso they seek ; and because all the things
Which on our outset were distinct and large
Are smaller and much weaker and quite grey,
And at last gone from us. No motion else.

We are upon the road. The thin swift moon
Runs with the running clouds that are the sky,
And with the running water runs — at whiles
Weak 'neath the film and heavy growth of reeds.
The country swims with motion. Time itself
Is consciously beside us, and perceived.
Our speed is such the sparks our engine leaves
Are burning after the whole train has passed.
The darkness is a tumult. We tear on,
The roll behind us and the cry before,
Constantly, in a lull of intense speed
And thunder. Any other sound is known
Merely by sight. The shrubs, the trees your eye
Scans for their growth, are far along in haze.

A TRIP TO PARIS AND BELGIUM

The sky has lost its clouds, and lies away
Oppressively at calm : the moon has failed :
Our speed has set the wind against us. Now
Our engine's heat is fiercer, and flings up
Great glares alongside. Wind and steam and speed
And clamour and the night. We are in Ghent.

THE STAIRCASE OF NOTRE DAME, PARIS

AS one who, groping in a narrow stair,
Hath a strong sound of bells upon his ears,
Which, being at a distance off, appears
Quite close to him because of the pent air :
So with this France. She stumbles file and square
Darkling and without space for breath : each one
Who hears the thunder says : “It shall anon
Be in among her ranks to scatter her.”

This may be ; and it may be that the storm
Is spent in rain upon the unscathed seas,
Or wasteth other countries ere it die :
Till she, — having climbed always through the swarm
Of darkness and of hurting sound, — from these
Shall step forth on the light in a still sky.

NEAR BRUSSELS—A HALF-WAY
PAUSE

THE turn of noontide has begun.
In the weak breeze the sunshine yields.
There is a bell upon the fields.
On the long hedgerow's tangled run
A low white cottage intervenes :
Against the wall a blind man leans,
And sways his face to have the sun.

Our horses' hoofs stir in the road,
Quiet and sharp. Light hath a song
Whose silence, being heard, seems long.
The point of noon maketh abode,
And will not be at once gone through.
The sky's deep colour saddens you,
And the heat weighs a dreamy load.

ANTWERP AND BRUGES

I CLIMBED the stair in Antwerp church,
What time the circling thews of sound
At sunset seem to heave it round.
Far up, the carillon did search
The wind, and the birds came to perch
Far under, where the gables wound.

In Antwerp harbour on the Scheldt
I stood along, a certain space
Of night. The mist was near my face;
Deep on, the flow was heard and felt.
The carillon kept pause, and dwelt
In music through the silent place.

John Memmeling and John van Eyck
Hold state at Bruges. In sore shame
I scanned the works that keep their name.
The carillon, which then did strike
Mine ears, was heard of theirs alike:
It set me closer unto them.

I climbed at Bruges all the flight
The belfry has of ancient stone.
For leagues I saw the east wind blown;
The earth was grey, the sky was white.
I stood so near upon the height
That my flesh felt the carillon.

ON LEAVING BRUGES

THE city's steeple-towers remove away,
Each singly ; as each vain infatuate Faith
Leaves God in heaven, and passes. A mere breath
Each soon appears, so far. Yet that which lay
The first is now scarce further or more grey
Than the last is. Now all are wholly gone.
The sunless sky has not once had the sun
Since the first weak beginning of the day.

The air falls back as the wind finishes,
And the clouds stagnate. On the water's face
The current breathes along, but is not stirred.
There is no branch that thrills with any bird.
Winter is to possess the earth a space,
And have its will upon the extreme seas.

VOX ECCLESIAE, VOX CHRISTI

I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? — REV. vi. : 9, 10.

NOT 'neath the altar only, — yet, in sooth,
There more than elsewhere, — is the cry, “ How long?
The right sown there hath still borne fruit in wrong —
The wrong waxed fourfold. Thence, (in hate of truth)
O'er weapons blessed for carnage, to fierce youth
From evil age, the word hath hissed along : —
“ Ye are the Lord's : go forth, destroy, be strong :
Christ's Church absolves ye from Christ's law of ruth.”

Therefore the wine-cup at the altar is
As Christ's own blood indeed, and as the blood
Of Christ's elect, at divers seasons spilt
On the altar-stone, that to man's church, for this,
Shall prove a stone of stumbling, — whence it stood
To be rent up ere the true Church be built.

THE MIRROR

SHE knew it not: — most perfect pain
To learn: this too she knew not. Strife
For me, calm hers, as from the first.
'Twas but another bubble burst
Upon the curdling draught of life, —
My silent patience mine again.

As who, of forms that crowd unknown
Within a distant mirror's shade,
Deems such an one himself, and makes
Some sign, but when the image shakes
No whit, he finds his thought betray'd,
And must seek elsewhere for his own.

DURING MUSIC

O COOL unto the sense of pain
That last night's sleep could not destroy
O warm unto the sense of joy,
That dreams its life within the brain.

What though I lean o'er thee to scan
The written music cramped and stiff; —
'Tis dark to me as hieroglyph
On those weird bulks Egyptian.

But as from those, dumb now and strange,
A glory wanders on the earth,
Even so thy tones can call a birth
From these, to shake my soul with change.

O swift, as in melodious haste
Float o'er the keys thy fingers small;
O soft, as is the rise and fall
Which stirs that shade within thy breast.

ON THE SITE OF A MULBERRY-
TREE;

PLANTED BY WM. SHAKSPEARE; FELLED BY THE
REV. F. GASTRELL

THIS tree, here fall'n, no common birth or death
Shared with its kind. The world's enfranchised son,
Who found the trees of Life and Knowledge one,
Here set it, frailer than his laurel-wreath.
Shall not the wretch whose hand it fell beneath
Rank also singly — the supreme unhung?
Lo! Sheppard, Turpin, pleading with black tongue
This viler thief's unsuffocated breath!

We'll search thy glossary, Shakspeare! whence almost,
And whence alone, some name shall be reveal'd
For this deaf drudge, to whom no length of ears
Sufficed to catch the music of the spheres;
Whose soul is carrion now, — too mean to yield
Some Starveling's ninth allotment of a ghost.

ON CERTAIN ELIZABETHAN REVIVALS

O RUFF-EMBASTIONED vast Elizabeth,
Bush to these bushel-bellied casks of wine,
Home-growth, 'tis true, but rank as turpentine —
What would we with such skittle-plays at death?
Say, must we watch these brawlers' brandished lathe,
Or to their reeking wit our ears incline,
Because all Castaly flowed crystalline
In gentle Shakspeare's modulated breath?

What! must our drama with the rat-pit vie,
Nor the scene close while one is left to kill?
Shall this be poetry? And thou — thou man
Of blood, thou cannibalic Caliban,
What shall be said of thee? A poet? — Fie!
“An honourable murderer, if you will.”

ENGLISH MAY

WOULD God your health were as this month of May
Should be, were this not England, — and your face
Abroad, to give the gracious sunshine grace
And laugh beneath the budding hawthorn-spray.
But here the hedgerows pine from green to grey
While yet May's lyre is tuning, and her song
Is weak in shade that should in sun be strong;
And your pulse springs not to so faint a lay.

If in my life be breath of Italy,
Would God that I might yield it all to you!
So, when such grafted warmth had burgeoned through
The languor of your Maytime's hawthorn-tree,
My spirit at rest should walk unseen and see
The garland of your beauty bloom anew.

DAWN ON THE NIGHT-JOURNEY

TILL dawn the wind drove round me. It is past
And still, and leaves the air to lisp of bird,
And to the quiet that is almost heard
Of the new-risen day, as yet bound fast
In the first warmth of sunrise. When the last
Of the sun's hours to-day shall be fulfilled,
There shall another breath of time be stilled
For me, which now is to my senses cast
As much beyond me as eternity,
Unknown, kept secret. On the newborn air
The moth quivers in silence. It is vast,
Yea, even beyond the hills upon the sea,
The day whose end shall give this hour as sheer
As chaos to the irrevocable Past.

TO PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON,

INCITING ME TO POETIC WORK

SWEET Poet, thou of whom these years that roll
Must one day yet the burdened birthright learn,
And by the darkness of thine eyes discern
How piercing was the sight within thy soul ;—
Gifted apart, thou goest to the great goal,
A cloud-bound radiant spirit, strong to earn,
Light-reft, that prize for which fond myriads yearn
Vainly light-blest, — the Seër's aureole.

And doth thine ear, divinely dowered to catch
All spherical sounds in thy song blent so well,
Still hearken for my voice's slumbering spell
With wistful love? Ah! let the Muse now snatch
My wreath for thy young brows, and bend to watch
Thy veiled transfiguring sense's miracle.

RALEIGH'S CELL IN THE TOWER

HERE writ was the World's History by his hand
Whose steps knew all the earth ; albeit his world
In these few piteous paces then was furl'd.
Here daily, hourly, have his proud feet spann'd
This smaller speck than the receding land
Had ever shown his ships ; what time he hurl'd
Abroad o'er new-found regions spiced and pearl'd
His country's high dominion and command.

Here dwelt two spheres. The vast terrestrial zone
His spirit traversed ; and that spirit was
Itself the zone celestial, round whose birth
The planets played within the zodiac's girth ;
Till hence, through unjust death unfeared, did pass
His spirit to the only land unknown.

FOR
AN ANNUNCIATION

EARLY GERMAN

THE lilies stand before her like a screen
Through which, upon this warm and solemn day,
God surely hears. For there she kneels to pray
Who wafts our prayers to God — Mary the Queen.
She was Faith's Present, parting what had been
From what began with her, and is for aye.
On either hand, God's twofold system lay :
With meek bowed face a Virgin prayed between.

So prays she, and the Dove flies in to her,
And she has turned. At the low porch is one
Who looks as though deep awe made him to smile.
Heavy with heat, the plants yield shadow there ;
The loud flies cross each other in the sun ;
And the aisled pillars meet the poplar-aisle.

FOR
A VIRGIN AND CHILD

BY HANS MEMMELINCK

(In the Academy of Bruges)

MYSTERY: God, man's life, born into man
of woman. There abideth on her brow
The ended pang of knowledge, the which now
Is calm assured. Since first her task began
She hath known all. What more of anguish than
Endurance oft hath lived through, the whole space
Through night till day, passed weak upon her face
While the heard lapse of darkness slowly ran?

All hath been told her touching her dear Son,
And all shall be accomplished. Where He sits
Even now, a babe, He holds the symbol fruit
Perfect and chosen. Until God permits,
His soul's elect still have the absolute
Harsh nether darkness, and make painful moan.

FOR
A MARRIAGE OF ST. CATHERINE

BY THE SAME

(In the Hospital of St. John at Bruges)

MYSTERY: Catherine the bride of Christ.
She kneels, and on her hand the holy Child
Now sets the ring. Her life is hushed and mild,
Laid in God's knowledge — ever unenticed
From God, and in the end thus fitly priced.
Awe, and the music that is near her, wrought
Of angels, have possessed her eyes in thought:
Her utter joy is hers, and hath sufficed.

There is a pause while Mary Virgin turns
The leaf, and reads. With eyes on the spread book,
That damsel at her knees reads after her.
John whom He loved, and John His harbinger,
Listen and watch. Whereon so'er thou look,
The light is starred in gems and the gold burns.

MARY'S GIRLHOOD

(For a Picture)

II

THESE are the symbols. On that cloth of red
I' the centre is the Tripoint: perfect each,
Except the second of its points, to teach
That Christ is not yet born. The books — whose head
Is golden Charity, as Paul hath said —
Those virtues are wherein the soul is rich:
Therefore on them the lily standeth, which
Is Innocence, being interpreted.

The seven-thorn'd briar and the palm seven-leaved
Are her great sorrow and her great reward.
Until the end be full, the Holy One
Abides without. She soon shall have achieved
Her perfect purity: yea, God the Lord
Shall soon vouchsafe His Son to be her Son.

THE CHURCH PORCHES

II

SISTER, arise : we have no more to sing,
Or say. The priest abideth as is meet
To minister. Rise up out of thy seat,
Though peradventure 'tis an irksome thing
To cross again the threshold of a king,
Where his doors stand against the evil street,
And let each step increase upon our feet
The dust we shook from them at entering.
Must we of very sooth go hence ; the air,
Whose heat outside makes mist that can be seen,
Is very clear and cool where we have been.
The priest abideth ministering. Lo !
As he for service, why not we for prayer ?
It is so bidden. Sister, let us go.

VERSES FOR ROSSETTI'S OWN
WORKS OF ART

MICHAEL SCOTT'S WOOING

(For a Drawing)

ROSE-SHEATHED beside the rosebud tongue
Lurks the young adder's tooth ;
Milk-mild from new-born hemlock-bluth
The earliest drops are wrung :
And sweet the flower of his first youth
When Michael Scott was young.

MNEMOSYNE

(For a Picture)

THOU fill'st from the winged chalice of the soul
Thy lamp, O Memory, fire-winged to its goal.

*POEMS IN ITALIAN (OR ITALIAN
AND ENGLISH), FRENCH,
AND LATIN*

LA RICORDANZA

MAGGIOR dolore è ben la Ricordanza,
O nell' amaro inferno amena stanza?

MEMORY

Is Memory most of miseries miserable,
Or the one flower of ease in bitterest hell?

CON manto d'oro, collana, ed anelli,
Le piace aver con quelli
Non altro che una rosa ai suoi capelli.

WITH golden mantle, rings and necklace fair,
It likes her best to wear
Only a rose within her golden hair.

Robe d'or, mais rien ne veut
Qu' une rose à ses cheveux.

A golden robe, yet will she wear
Only a rose in her golden hair.

BARCAROLA

PER carità,
Mostrami amore :
Mi punge il cuore,
Ma non si sa
Dove è amore.
Che mi fa
La bella età,
Sè non si sa
Come amerà ?
Ahi me solingo !
Il cuor mi stringo !
Non più ramingo,
Per carità !

Per carità,
Mostrami il cielo :
Tutto è un velo,
E non si sa
Dove è il cielo.
Se si sta
Così colà,
Non si sa
Se non si va.
Ahi me lontano !
Tutto è in vano !
Prendimi in mano,
Per carità !

BARCAROLA

OLTRE tomba
Qualche cosa?
E che ne dici?
Saremo felici?
Terra mai posa,
E mar rimbomba.

BAMBINO FASCIATO

A PIPPO Pipistrello
Farfalla la fanciulla :
“ O vedi quanto è bello
Ridendo in questa culla !
E noi l'abbiamo fatto,
Noi due insiem d 'un tratto,
E senza noi fia nulla.”

THOMÆ FIDES

“ **D**IGITUM tuum, Thoma,
Infer, et vide manûs !
Manum tuam, Thoma,
Affer, et mitte in latus.”
“ Dominus et Deus,
Deus,” dixit,
“ Et Dominus meus.”

“ Quia me vidisti,
Thoma, credidisti.
Beati qui non viderunt,
Thoma, et crediderunt.”
“ Dominus et Deus,
Deus,” dixit,
“ Et Dominus meus.”

VERSICLES AND FRAGMENTS

THE ORCHARD-PIT

PILED deep below the screening apple-branch
They lie with bitter apples in their hands :
And some are only ancient bones that blanch,
And some had ships that last year's wind did launch,
And some were yesterday the lords of lands.

In the soft dell, among the apple-trees,
High up above the hidden pit she stands,
And there for ever sings, who gave to these,
That lie below, her magic hour of ease,
And those her apples holden in their hands.

This in my dreams is shown me ; and her hair
Crosses my lips and draws my burning breath ;
Her song spreads golden wings upon the air,
Life's eyes are gleaming from her forehead fair,
And from her breasts the ravishing eyes of Death.

Men say to me that sleep hath many dreams,
Yet I knew never but this dream alone :
There, from a dried-up channel, once the stream's,

THE ORCHARD-PIT

The glen slopes up; even such in sleep it seems
As to my waking sight the place well known.

* * * * *

My love I call her, and she loves me well:
But I love her as in the maelstrom's cup
The whirled stone loves the leaf inseparable
That clings to it round all the circling swell,
And that the same last eddy swallows up.

TO ART

I LOVED thee ere I loved a woman, Love.

ON BURNS

IN whomsoe'er, since Poesy began,
A Poet most of all men we may scan,
Burns of all poets is the most a Man.

FIN DI MAGGIO

OH! May sits crowned with hawthorn-flower,
And is Love's month, they say;
And Love's the fruit that is ripened best
By ladies' eyes in May.

And the Sibyl, you know. I saw her with my own eyes
at Cumæ, hanging in a jar; and, when the boys asked her,
“What would you, Sibyl?” she answered, “I would die.”—
PETRONIUS.

“I SAW the Sibyl at Cumæ”
(One said) “with mine own eye.
She hung in a cage, and read her rune
To all the passers-by.
Said the boys, ‘What wouldst thou, Sibyl?’
She answered, ‘I would die.’”

As balmy as the breath of her you love
When deep between her breasts it comes to you.

“WAS it a friend or foe that spread these lies?”
“Nay, who but infants question in such wise?
’Twas one of my most intimate enemies.”

AT her step the water-hen
Springs from her nook, and skimming the clear stream,
Ripples its waters in a sinuous curve,
And dives again in safety.

WOULD God I knew there were a God to thank
When thanks rise in me!

I SHUT myself in with my soul,
And the shapes come eddying forth.

IF I could die like the British Queen
Who faced the Roman war,
Or hang in a cage for my country's sake
Like Black Bess of Dunbar !

SHE bound her green sleeve on my helm,
Sweet pledge of love's sweet meed :
Warm was her bared arm round my neck
As well she bade me speed ;
And her kiss clings still between my lips,
Heart's beat and strength at need.

WHERE is the man whose soul has never waked
To sudden pity of the poor torn past?

As much as in a hundred years, she's dead :
Yet is to-day the day on which she died.

WHO shall say what is said in me,
With all that I might have been dead in me?

TRANSLATIONS

LA PIA

DANTE

“**A**H when on earth thy voice again is heard,
And thou from the long road hast rested thee,”
After the second spirit said the third,
“Remember me who am La Pia. Me
Siena, me Maremma, made, unmade.

He knoweth this thing in his heart — even he
With whose fair jewel I was ringed and wed.”

CAPITOLO

A. M. SALVINI TO FRANCESCO REDI, 16 —

KNOW then, dear Redi, (sith thy gentle heart
Would read my riddle and my mystery,) —
That I am thinking from men's thoughts apart;
And that I learn deeper theology
While my soul travails over Dante's page,
Than with long study in the schools might be.
Many and many things, holy and sage,
To the dim mind his mighty words unveil,
Thralling it with a welcome vassalage:
Nor doth his glorious lamp flicker or fail
By reason of that vapoury shrouding strange,
Which in like argument may much prevail.
Through old and trodden paths he scorned to range;
He took the leap of Chaos; — high, and low,
And to the middle region's state of change.
Bright things, and dubious things, and things of woe,
Thence to the mind he spake with pictured speech,
Making the tongue cry out, "They must be so!"
The how and wherefore will be told of each;
And that his soul might take its flight and roam,
Beatrice gave him wings of boundless reach.
O hallowed breast, the Muses' chosen home,

CAPITOLO

Blest be the working of thy steadfast aim,
And blest thy fancy through all time to come,
Which whispers now, and now with words of flame
Like sudden thunder makes the heart to pause ;
Whence laurel to thy brow and myrtle came.
For in love-speaking, so to love's sweet laws
Thy verse is subject, that no truer truth
From passion's store the stricken spirit draws.
But pent in Hell's huge coil, for pity and ruth
Thy voice is slow and broken and profound,
To the harsh echoes singing sorrowful sooth ;
And thy steps stumble in the weary bound ; —
Of that dim maze where nothing is that shines
Stalking the desolate circles round and round.
Then through the prisoned air which sobs and pines
With Purgatorial grief, up dost thou soar
To Paradise, on the sun's dazzling lines.
There all the wonders thou dost reckon o'er
Of that great Joy that never waxeth old, —
A mighty hearing seldom heard before.
To us by thee pleasures and woes are told,
What path to fly from, in whose steps to tread,
That from man's mind the veil may be unrolled.
But oh ! thine angry tones, awful and dread,
What time God puts the thunder in thy mouth,
Upon His foes the righteous wrath to shed !
Then, then thy thoughts are of a mighty growth ; —
Then does the terror of His holy curse
Hurtle from East to West, from North to South ; —

CAPITULO

Then heavy sorrow 'ginn'st thou to rehearse ; —
Then Priests and Princes tremble and are pale,
More than with ague shaken at thy verse.

Though in thy praise all human praises fail,
Even of the few who love thee and who bless, —
The scoffing of the herd shall not prevail.

Thy words are weights, under whose mighty stress
Tyrants and evil men shall shrink and quail ;
True seeds of an undying perfectness.

TWO LYRICS FROM NICCOLÒ
TOMMASEO

I

THE YOUNG GIRL

EVEN as a child that weeps,
Lulled by the love it keeps,
My grief lies back and sleeps.

Yes, it is Love bears up
My soul on his spread wings,
Which the days would else chafe out
With their infinite harassings.
To quicken it, he brings
The inward look and mild
That thy face wears, my child.

As in a gilded room
Shines 'mid the braveries
Some wild-flower, by the bloom
Of its delicate quietness
Recalling the forest-trees
In whose shadow it was,
And the water and the green grass:—

THE YOUNG GIRL

Even so, 'mid the stale loves
The city prisoneth,
Thou touchest me gratefully,
Like Nature's wholesome breath :
Thy heart nor hardeneth
In pride, nor putteth on
Obeisance not its own.

Not thine the skill to shut
The love up in thine heart,
Neither to seem more tender,
Less tender than thou art.
Thou dost not hold apart
In silence when thy joys
Most long to find a voice.

Let the proud river-course,
That shakes its mane and champs,
Run between marble shores
By the light of many lamps,
While all the ooze and the damps
Of the city's choked-up ways
Make it their draining-place.

Rather the little stream
For me ; which, hardly heard,
Unto the flower, its friend,

THE YOUNG GIRL

Whispers as with a word.
The timid journeying bird
Of the pure drink that flows
Takes but one drop, and goes.

II

A FAREWELL

I SOOTHED and pitied thee : and for thy lips, —
A smile, a word (sure guide
To love that's ill to hide !)
Was all I had thereof.

Even as an orphan boy, whom, sore distress'd,
A gentle woman meets beside the road
And takes him home with her, — so to thy breast
Thou didst take home my image : pure abode !
'Twas but a virgin's dream. This heart bestow'd
Respect and piety
And friendliness on thee :
But it is poor in love.

No, I am not for thee. Thou art too new,
I am too old, to the old beaten way.
The griefs are not the same which grieve us two :
Thy thought and mine lie far apart to-day.
Less than I wish, more than I hope, always
Are heart and soul in thee.
Thou art too much for me,
Sister, and not enough.

A FAREWELL

A better and a fresher heart than mine
Perchance may meet thee ere thy youth be told ;
Or, cheated by the longing that is thine,
Waiting for life perchance thou shalt wax old.
Perchance the time may come when I may hold
It had been best for me
To have had thy ministry
On the steep path and rough.

TWO SONGS FROM VICTOR HUGO'S
"BURGRAVES"

I

THROUGH the long winter the rough wind tears ;
With their white garment the hills look wan.

Love on : who cares ?

Who cares ? Love on.

My mother is dead ; God's patience wears ;

It seems my chaplain will not have done.

Love on : who cares ?

Who cares ? Love on.

The Devil, hobbling up the stairs,

Comes for me with his ugly throng.

Love on : who cares ?

Who cares ? Love on.

II

I N the time of the civil broils
Our swords are stubborn things.
A fig for all the cities !
A fig for all the kings !

The Burgrave prospereth :
Men fear him more and more.
Barons, a fig for his Holiness !
A fig for the Emperor !

Right well we hold our own
With the brand and the iron rod.
A fig for Satan Burgraves !
Burgraves, a fig for God !

LILITH

FROM GÖTHE

HOLD thou thy heart against her shining hair,
If, by thy fate, she spread it once for thee;
For, when she nets a young man in that snare,
So twines she him he never may be free.

NOTES

NOTES

I

VARIANTS IN *THE HOUSE OF LIFE*

Instead of printing at the foot of each page the new readings given by Rossetti in his 1881 version of these Sonnets, we have finally decided to give them here, thus showing at a glance the entire extent of his alterations.

BRIDAL BIRTH

II, line 9, "shielded in" reads "shadowed by."

LOVE'S REDEMPTION

The title was changed to "Love's Testament."

III, line 2, "lips" reads "heart."

line 3, "Clothed with his fire, thy heart his testament;"

line 8, "And murmured, 'I am thine, thou'rt one with me!'"

line 9, "for" reads "to."

NUPTIAL SLEEP

VII. In the original MS. entitled *Placatâ Venere*. Printed as Sonnet V in the volume of 1870. It is an interesting fact that the cancellation of this sonnet did not take place until after the sixth edition of the *Poems* was issued in 1872, that being the latest edition in which it appeared in England.

SUPREME SURRENDER

VIII, line 2, "Along his love-sown harvest-field of sleep"

NOTES

LOVE'S LOVERS

IX, line 5, "deem" reads "vaunt."

THE PORTRAIT

XI, line 9, "long lithe" reads "enthroning"

WINGED HOURS

XXVI, line 8, "Full oft through our contending joys unheard."

THE CHOICE

LXXII (1), line 5, "yellow" reads "golden."

lines 12 and 13 read,

"Through many years they toil; then on a day

They die not,—for their life was death,—but cease;"

LXXIV (3), line 12, "grey" reads "last."

BARREN SPRING

LXXXIV, line 1, reads

"Once more the changed year's turning wheel returns:"

line 5, "now" reads "here."

line 13, "gaze" reads "stay."

VAIN VIRTUES

LXXXVI, line 7, reads

"Of anguish, while the pit's pollution leaves"

line 9, "garbage" reads "tribute."

line 13, "worthier" reads "destined."

LOST DAYS

LXXXVII, line 8, reads

"The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway?"

THE ONE HOPE

CII, line 1, "When vain desire at last and vain regret"

line 12, "written" reads "alien."

NOTES

II

NOTES BY W. M. ROSSETTI

These notes are taken from *The Collected Works of Rossetti*, (London, 1886,) and constitute all that deal with the contents of *Ballads and Sonnets*.

ROSE MARY

This poem was written in the early autumn of 1871. The *Beryl-songs* are a later addition, say 1879. The very general opinion has been that they were better away, and I cannot but agree with it. I have heard my brother say that he wrote them to show that he was not incapable of the daring rhyming and rhythmical exploits of some other poets. As to this point readers must judge. It is at any rate true that in making the word "Beryl" the pivot of his experiment, a word to which there are the fewest possible rhymes, my brother weighted himself heavily.

THE HOUSE OF LIFE: *Prefatory Note*

This note appeared in the volume *Ballads and Sonnets*, 1881. The point which it emphasizes is that a series entitled *The House of Life* had been published in the volume *Poems* of 1870, consisting at that time partly of sonnets and partly of other compositions; whereas in the volume *Ballads and Sonnets* the series thus entitled consisted solely of sonnets, and was in other respects not a little different.

THE HOUSE OF LIFE: *Text*

The dates of the various sonnets which make up this series are extremely various. The earliest of them may date in 1848, or even a year or so preceding. The latest come close before, or even in, 1881, in the autumn of which year the series was published in the same form which it now bears. One positive line of demarcation between the various sonnets separates those which appeared in the volume *Poems*,

NOTES

published in the Spring of 1870, from any others. I am far from having a clear idea or definite information as to the true dates of the sonnets. But I think the reader is entitled to some sort of guidance regarding them, forming as they do so extremely important a constituent in my brother's poetical and intellectual record; and therefore, keeping in view the line of demarcation above referred to, I append here a rough suggestion of what may have been their sequence in point of date. All the items which are here entered "Between 1848 and 1869" appeared in the *Poems* of 1870, except the second and third sonnets (Numbers 76 and 77) of *Old and New Art*.

Between 1848 and 1869

| NO. | NO. |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 91. "Retro me, Sathana!" | 85. Farewell to the Glen |
| 72 to 74. The Choice | 96. The Vase of Life |
| 75 to 77. Old and New Art | 6. The Kiss |
| 70. Autumn Idleness | 8. Supreme Surrender |
| 48. Broken Music | 10. Passion and Worship |
| 66. Known in Vain | 80. The Monochord |
| 16. The Birth-Bond | 99. He and I |
| 68. The Landmark | 100, 101. Newborn Death |
| 64. Inclusiveness | 102. The One Hope |
| 78. Soul's Beauty* | 2. Bridal Birth |
| 79. Body's Beauty* | 3. Love's Redemption |
| 71. The Hill Summit | 4. Lovesight |
| 86. Vain Virtues | 11. The Portrait |
| 87. Lost Days | 12. The Love-Letter |
| 88. Death's Songsters | 17. A Day of Love |
| 92. Lost on Both Sides | 22. Love-Sweetness |
| 93. The Sun's Shame. 1. | 24. Love's Baubles |
| 98. A Superscription | 26. Winged Hours |
| 49. Death-in-Love | 39. The Morrow's Message |
| 37. Life-in-Love | 40. Sleepless Dreams |
| 38. The Love-Moon | 46. Secret Parting |
| 50 to 53. Willow-Wood | 47. Parted Love |
| 56. Stillborn Love | 83. Hoarded Joy |
| 69. A Dark Day | 84. Barren Spring |

NOTES

Between 1870 and 1881

| NO. | NO. |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 30. The Moonstar | 44. Love and Hope |
| 31. Last Fire | 45. Cloud and Wind |
| 32. Her Gifts | 54. Without Her |
| 33. Equal Troth | 55. Love's Fatality |
| 34. Venus Victrix | 81. From Dawn to Noon |
| 35. The Dark Glass | 97. Life the Beloved |
| 36. The Lamp's Shrine | 41. Severed Selves |
| 21. Gracious Moonlight | 42. Through Death to Love |
| 1. Love Enthroned | 61. Transfigured Life |
| 5. Heart's Hope | 67. The Heart of the Night |
| 9. Love's Lovers | 82. Memorial Thresholds |
| 13. The Lovers' Walk | 89. Hero's Lamp |
| 14. Youth's Antiphony | 90. The Trees of the Garden |
| 15. Youth's Spring-tribute | 94. The Sun's Shame. 11. |
| 18. Beauty's Pageant | 62. The Song Throe |
| 19. Genius in Beauty | 63. The Soul's Sphere |
| 20. Silent Noon | 65. Ardour and Memory |
| 23. Heart's Haven | 57 to 59. True Woman |
| 27. Mid-Rapture | 60. Love's Last Gift |
| 28. Heart's Compass | Introductory Sonnet |
| 29. Soul-light | 25. Pride of Youth |
| 43. Hope Overtaken | 95. Michelangelo's Kiss |

The *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, the work of the friend of his closing days, Mr. Hall Caine, shows that the author regarded *Still-born Love*, *Known in Vain*, *Lost Days* and *The One Hope* (Nos. 56, 66, 87 and 102), as about the best of the series.

AT THE SUNRISE IN 1848

My brother never published this sonnet. It is not of his best; yet, as it openly proclaims that he shared the aspirations and exultations of

* These two sonnets were written respectively for Rossetti's pictures entitled *Sibylla Palmifera* and *Lilith*. They might therefore, if he had not himself embodied them in *The House of Life*, have appeared appropriately in the section of the present book named *Sonnets and Verses for Rossetti's own Works of Art*.

NOTES

the great year of European revolution, I have thought the personal interest attaching to the sonnet to be such as to entitle it to something better than final oblivion.

AUTUMN SONG

This lyric was set to music by Mr. Dannreuther during my brother's lifetime, and was published in that form—though not otherwise. I have therefore felt no hesitation in including it among his collected works. As to the next following lyric, *The Lady's Lament*, which had hitherto been wholly unpublished, I did hesitate; but I finally admitted it, as being a somewhat marked performance of its class. The class is the same as with the *Autumn Song*; each being the utterance of a dreamy or indeed morbid mood of desolation to which the youth of our modern generations is prone.

A TRIP TO PARIS AND BELGIUM

In the autumn of 1849 my brother undertook this trip along with Mr. Holman Hunt. He wrote the verses mostly while actually traveling by rail, etc., and sent them in his letters to me. Under the above heading I have pieced together such portions of his verse-missives as appear to me worthy of preservation in the present form. Much the same observation applies to the two ensuing sonnets, *The Staircase of Notre Dame, Paris*, and *On Leaving Bruges*; and to the lyric, *Near Brussels, a Halfway Pause*. The sonnet, *Place de la Bastille, Paris*, belongs to the same series; it is the only one of the set which my brother published in one of his volumes (*Ballads and Sonnets*). The lyric *Antwerp and Bruges* is an altered version (as I find it in his own MS.) of *The Carillon*, which was printed in *The Germ*.

VOX ECCLESIAE VOX CHRISTI

This sonnet, hitherto unpublished, was written in 1849. My brother wrote it to serve as a pendant to a sonnet of my own composition, which was published in *The Germ*, 1850, under the vague title *The Evil under the Sun* ("How long, O Lord," etc.). That title was vamped up to appease the publisher's nervousness; the sonnet being in fact written by me as a sorrowful commemoration of the collapse—the temporary collapse, as we now know it to have been—of various

NOTES

revolutionary movements in Europe, especially that of Hungary. My own title for the sonnet was *On the General Oppression of the Better by the Worse Cause*, October 1849. The sonnet has of late years been more than once republished under a more generalized title, *Democracy Downtrodden*. I mention these facts, not to thrust my own performance into notice, but to bring out the more clearly the precise point of view which marks my brother's sonnet.

THE MIRROR

Written in 1850. My brother never published this snatch of verse, but he had a certain liking for it, and I think it should now find a niche among his works.

DURING MUSIC

Written in 1851. Hitherto unpublished.

ON THE SITE OF A MULBERRY-TREE, ETC.

My brother had this sonnet printed long ago, but never published it except in the *Academy* for 15 February 1871. In the last line he substituted (in MS.) the word "Starveling's" for "tailor's;" and I remember he once told me that his real reason for not publishing the sonnet in either of his volumes was to avoid hurting the feelings of some sensitive member or members of the tailoring craft who might dislike the line in its original wording. This point is referred to in a letter addressed by my brother to Mr. Hall Caine, and published in that gentleman's *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*.

ON CERTAIN ELIZABETHAN REVIVALS

This sonnet had hitherto appeared only in Mr. Caine's volume above-mentioned. My brother had offered it for collection, *Sonnets of Three Centuries*, compiled by Mr. Caine; but it dropped out of that book, as being little in harmony with the other contributions therein by Rossetti. The sonnet was written many years prior to the date of either of Mr. Caine's volumes.

NOTES

ENGLISH MAY

This sonnet had not hitherto been published. I regard it as addressed to Miss Siddal, whom my brother married in 1860. Its date may probably have been 1854.

DAWN ON THE NIGHT-JOURNEY

Also hitherto unpublished.

TO PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON

This sonnet was printed in Mr. William Sharp's book, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, a Record and a Study*. In line 4 he gives the word "sight." In the MS. in my own possession I find "light" instead; but I incline to think that Mr. Sharp's version is correct.

RALEIGH'S CELL IN THE TOWER

This sonnet was published in Mr. Caine's *Sonnets of Three Centuries*.

FOR AN ANNUNCIATION, EARLY GERMAN

This is an early sonnet, hitherto unpublished—perhaps the earliest of all the *Sonnets on Pictures*.

FOR A VIRGIN AND CHILD, BY HAND MEMMELINCK; AND A MARRIAGE OF ST. CATHERINE, BY THE SAME

These sonnets were published in *The Germ*; I have thought it, on the whole, better to admit them here. A few verbal alterations are made on MS. authority.

MARY'S GIRLHOOD

The picture to which these sonnets relate was the first oil-painting, 1848-49, completed by my brother. The concluding lines of Sonnet I, "She woke in her white bed," etc., have a more direct connection, however, with his second picture, *The Annunciation* (or *Ecce Ancilla Domini*), now in the National Gallery. Sonnet II was inscribed by my brother on the frame of his first picture. He never published it otherwise; but it has been given in Mr. Sharp's book, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, etc.

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THE CHURCH PORCHES, II

Sonnet 1 was published by my brother in the volume *Ballads and Sonnets*. It was written as one of a brace of sonnets. He never published the second; but this is to be found in an article, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, by Mr. Gosse, printed in *The Century Magazine* in 1882. I am rather reluctant to miss out that second sonnet; but, as my brother saw fit to leave it unused when he gave publicity to the first, I have decided to conform. [It is reprinted in the present edition on page 301.]

MICHAEL SCOTT'S WOOING

My brother made two or three drawings of this subject of invention, diverse in composition. He contemplated carrying out the subject in a large picture, which was never executed; I am not certain whether a water-colour of it was produced or not. He took some pains over the wording of the illustrative verse, but never published it. I think it deserves a place here, if merely as appertaining to one of his own designs.

MNEMOSYNE

This couplet was inscribed upon the frame of the picture entitled *Mnemosyne, or the Lamp of Memory*.

ROBE D'OR, ETC.

This French couplet with its English equivalent — and also the preceding Italian triplet with the like — may, I think, have been written to serve as motto for some picture; I could not say which.

BARCAROLA

The two little songs thus entitled had not hitherto been published; nor yet the *Bambino Fasciato* nor *La Ricordanza*.

THOMÆ FIDES

It is only on looking through my brother's MSS. that I have become aware of his having ventured thus into the realm of Latin verse. I find the little composition written out more than once, and with alterations

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of diction which convince me that it must be his own composition. It was intended to appear in a "lyrical tragedy," *The Doom of the Sirens*, of which he wrote out the scheme.

VERSICLES AND FRAGMENTS

I have taken these from among various jottings in my brother's notebooks. The first item, named *The Orchard-Pit*, is all that I can find written of a poem which was long and seriously projected: the argument of the poem appears printed now among the Prose works. Of the other items I need perhaps say nothing, unless it be this — that, slight as they are, they appear to me worthy of preservation on one ground or another. I do not think that any of the *Versicles and Fragments* belong to my brother's earlier period.

CAPITOLO — A. M. SALVINI TO FRANCESCO REDI

Hitherto unpublished. This must be a very early specimen of my brother's translating-work — I think 1847 or 1848.

TWO LYRICS FROM NICCOLÒ TOMMASEO

These are also very early. When Tommaseo's death was announced, Rossetti sent them to the *Athenæum* (13 June, 1874), with the following prefatory lines: — "In your late obituary notice (*Athenæum*, May 16), of Niccolò Tommaseo, a passing allusion is made to his earlier lyrical poetry. Any countryman of his, looking, years ago when it appeared, into the slender collection of these verses, must have been struck by their not being chiefly concerned with public events and interests; inevitably a rare exception in those dark yearning-days of the Italian Muse. Perhaps the two translated specimens which I offer of their delicate and romantic tone may not be unacceptable to some of your readers."

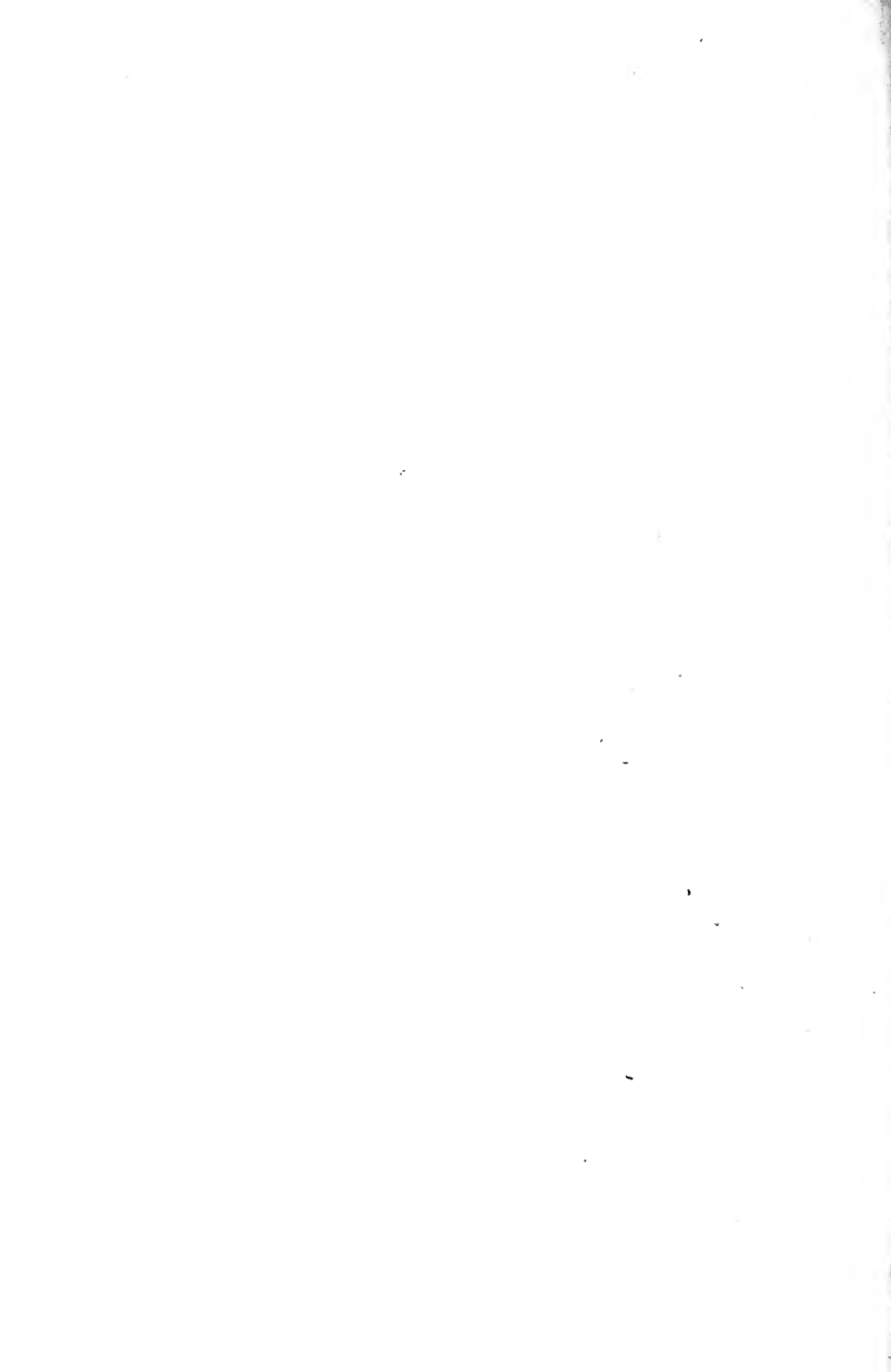
TWO SONGS FROM VICTOR HUGO'S "BURGRAVES"

These translations also, hitherto unpublished, are very early performances — perhaps 1847.

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LILITH FROM GÖTHE

When my brother was projecting his picture of *Lilith*, towards 1866, he asked me to copy out for him the lines from the Brocken-scene in *Faust*, along with Shelley's translation of them. I did so. I find my transcript pasted into one of his note-books, along with this quatrain as translated by himself. As it has some interest of association, I reproduce it here.



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